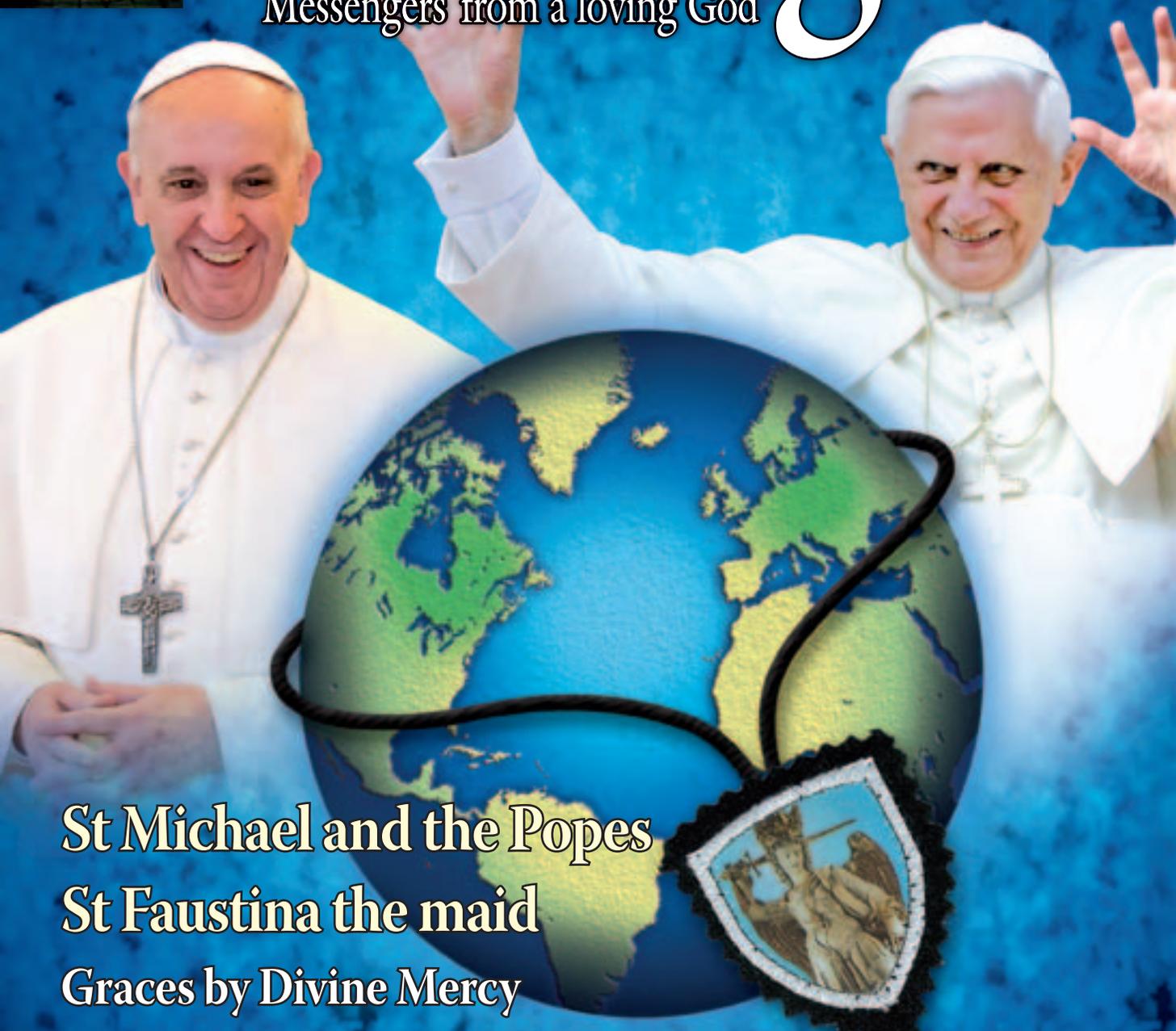




The Angels

Messengers from a loving God



St Michael and the Popes

St Faustina the maid

Graces by Divine Mercy

The Sacrement of Healing

Dangers of New Age

First Knight in Ireland



We should show a special kind of mercy toward the souls in purgatory. St Faustina had a vision of them, she said: “I saw my guardian angel who ordered me to follow him. In a moment I was in a misty place full of fire in which there was a great crowd of suffering souls. They were praying fervently, but to no avail, for themselves, only we can come to their aid” (Diary 20).

We should remember that every prayer brings the holy souls in purgatory relief, especially prayers with attached indulgences, such as the Rosary or the Way of the Cross. The greatest relief comes from the offering of a Holy Mass. There could be physical suffering, mental anguish, good deeds and all sacrifices, offered with the intention of helping the poor souls to bring them relief. The souls in purgatory cannot help themselves in any way, but they can help people on earth with their prayers to God.

It is important to strive to be merciful toward others. To make at least one act of mercy daily. Life will bring us plenty of opportunities to do this. St Faustina said: “Help me, O Lord, that my eyes may be merciful, so that I may never suspect or judge from appearances, but look for what is beautiful in my neighbours’ souls and come to their rescue. I will refuse my heart to no one. I will be sincere even with those who, I know, will abuse my kindness. And I will lock myself up in the

most merciful Heart of Jesus. I will bear my own suffering in silence. May your mercy, O Lord, rest upon me.... O my Jesus, transform me into Yourself, for You can do all things” (Diary 163).

We ask Jesus and St Michael the Archangel to help us and give us strength to be holy and good in all that we do. May our guardian angel help us to have a good conscience and always do the right thing. Jesus Christ is ready once again to be crucified and to die for you and me. You can always turn to Him. He will give you a wonderful welcome because you are his beloved. Your place is in His heart. Only this makes you fully and endlessly happy.

I assure you of the constant daily prayer of the priests of the Congregation of St Michael the Archangel for all our readers and their families. Please let others know about this magazine and help us to distribute it all over the world.

God bless you.

Fr **Peter Prusakiewicz** CSMA

The Angels

Messengers from a loving God

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Graces by the Divine Mercy Image



I would like to share my testimony and express my gratitude to Jesus, the Divine Mercy and the Holy Mother for all graces I asked for at the Divine Mercy Shrine in Lagiewniki, Cracow.

On Monday, 8th December, I was unexpectedly made redundant. I travelled to the Divine Mercy Shrine with my heart full of immeasurable pain due to the injustice I had received at work. I was filled with tremendous fear for my future as I am a single mother with a huge bank loan.

I asked the nuns to pray the chaplet of the Divine Mercy and have a Holy Mass for my intentions. One of the nuns heard that I had lost my job, she said: “Do not worry! Today is Our Lady’s feast day. You are going to return here and say thank you!”

I felt irritated inside: “It is easy for you to say that! You have a place to sleep, you are given food, you do not have a child, no one will disconnect your gas and electricity supply, no bank will chase you for unpaid loans!”

Crying, I attended the Holy Mass in the chapel with the Divine Mercy Image and the tomb of St Faustina.

Armed with courage

After a few moments I noticed Jesus’ hand was moving up and down, to the

left and then to the right, like when a priest gives a blessing. I immediately realised the sign of the Lord and heard the words: “I will buoy you up. I am with you.” I left the chapel completely in shock.

I looked at the job vacancies for the whole week but I was not able to call any would-be employers. The only thing I had the energy to do was to pray. The following week, armed with courage, I made my first telephone call. The very next day I had a job interview; my voice was trembling and my legs were shaking with nerves. I kept repeating to myself that it was just a beginning, the first job interview. I did not even think to take my CV with me.

The sign of the cross

To my great surprise, after a fifteen-minute interview I heard that I had got the job! The part-time office hours fitted my needs and the bonus was, no commuting to work! I received my new contract on the day I was actually made redundant from my previous employer.

A week later I returned to the Divine Mercy Shrine. After praying

the Divine Mercy chaplet I attended the Holy Mass. Again, I noticed that Jesus was moving His right hand towards His heart as if He wanted to finish the sign of the cross. I thought it was a sign of His blessing and mercy.

Before, my heart and soul was in total despair, but now it is full of joy. I praised God and thanked Him although I still find it hard to believe what happened to me.

It is now one year since I started my new job and I am at peace, happy and have settled well into my new role. The nun’s prophecy came true. The Mother of God and the Merciful Jesus saved me.

A witness

Maybe one may consider my testimony strange but from December last year I have been a witness to the Divine Mercy and the Mother of God, who had greatly helped me, although I was not in a close relationship with Her. Glory be to the Lord for His mercy!

M.K., Poland

Winter saints

The life of St Thomas Becket seems to be a perfect illustration of Jesus' words: "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money" (Luke 16:13).

Thomas was born into a rich family of Norman origins in 1118. From the very beginning his education was entrusted to Catholic priests at a school in Merton. After graduation from university in Paris, young Thomas returned to London and engaged in his father's trade. However, his tutors had planted the seed of faith within the young Thomas which grew slowly. Something was missing in his life... Of course, money was important. It provided a comfortable life, excellent food, luxurious clothes, influence and friendship with the higher class of society. But deep in his heart Thomas longed for God.

Extraordinary gifts

He went to Theobald, the Primate of England, to be admitted to the clergy. Theobald must have realised Becket's extraordinary gifts as he made him the archdeacon of Canterbury (in 1154). King Henry II also appreciated Thomas' loyalty and commitment to the royal government. They became very close friends. The true-blue royal subject was soon rewarded with the Lord Chancellor nomination.

After Theobald's death, Becket became the Primate. It was a moment of a total turnabout in his life. Thomas realised that he could only

serve God. The ambitious courtier and determined careerist, transformed into a genuine man of faith devoted to the Church. He changed his life radically: resigned from the post of Lord Chancellor, began an austere life filled with prayer and to fight for the Church's rights and privileges.

This led to conflict with the king who tried to limit the Church's power and authority. In 1164 Becket was forced to leave the country when he refused to sign the Constitutions of Clarendon, which meant nothing other than an approval of the King's demands.

As a result of the intervention of Pope Alexander III, Thomas came back to England in 1170 after spending six years in France.

Exile made him stronger

The exile seemed to make him into an even stronger defender of the Church. King Henry II was believed to complain angrily about Becket. But whatever it was he had said, the king's words were interpreted as a royal command. Four knights killed the Primate during vespers in the cathedral.

Becket's assassination triggered a public outrage in England and worldwide as well.

Three years later Pope Alexander III canonised him as a martyr. King



■ St Thomas Becket's martyrdom by Meister Francke

Henry II made a public penance. Throughout the ages the tomb of St Thomas Becket has been visited by numerous pilgrims. In 1538 King Henry VIII gave the order to destroy it.

The feast day of St Thomas Becket is on 29th December (the day he was murdered). Like St George, he is the patron saint of England.

Prayer to St Thomas Becket (taken from the Roman Missal)

O God, for the sake of whose Church the glorious Bishop Thomas fell by the sword of ungodly men: grant, we beseech Thee, that all who implore his aid, may obtain the good fruit of his petition. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who livest and reignest with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

St Andrew came from Bethsaida by the Sea of Galilee (cf. John 1:44) but lived with his older brother Peter in Capernaum (cf. Mark 1, 29:30). At the beginning he had been a disciple of John the Baptist. But, when Christ was pointed out to him, he immediately knew in his heart that Christ was the Messiah Himself.

St Andrew not only joined Jesus but he brought Peter to Him as well: “The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God!’ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, ‘What do you want?’ They said, ‘Rabbi’ (which means “Teacher”), where are you staying?’ ‘Come,’ he replied, ‘and you will see.’ So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with Him. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus” (John 1, 35:42).

Christ changed their lives. Both St Andrew and St John were the first Apostles called up by Christ. However, neither Andrew nor Peter joined Him at once. Meeting Christ changed their lives; it awoke a longing for a deep relationship with God. Yet, they still fished. They must have been quite prosperous because they owned ships and nets. During fishing Christ came again and called them up: “As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon, called Peter and his



■ Crucifixion of St Andrew by Carlo Braccresco, 1495

brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake. ‘Come, follow Me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish people.’ At once they left their nets and followed Him” (Matthew 4, 18:20).

The brothers did it at once. It seemed that, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, they realised that only the Son of God could satisfy all the existential hungers of their hearts.

From the very beginning of Christ’s public work Andrew was one of His closest companions. He witnessed the miracle of the transformation of water into wine at Cana (cf. John 2, 1:12) and the feeding of thousands of people with five barley loaves and two small fish (cf. John 6, 1:14). Several times Jesus stayed at the brothers’ house in Capernaum.

Apostolic activity

There are many views on the apostolic activity of St Andrew after Pentecost. According to Origen, he went to Scythia, a country between the rivers of the Danube and the Don. If so, he might have been the Apostle of the Slavs who had their first seats there. St Jerome claimed that St Andrew worked in Cappadocia, Pontus and

Bithynia whereas Theodoret believed that he went from Scythia to Thrace and Epirus. Whatever the sources understanding of his apostolic work, they all agree that St Andrew was crucified upside down on a cross of X shape in Patras in Achaea (nowadays Greece).

The devotion to St Andrew seems still quite vivid. Numerous nations and countries took him as their patron saint, for instance: Scotland, Naples, the Netherlands, Spain, Luxembourg, Greece, Holland, Germany, Russia and Sicily. St Andrew’s feast day is on 30th November.

Prayer to St Andrew

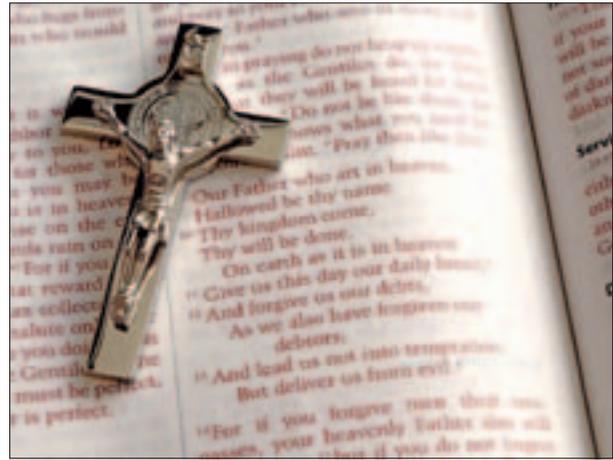
Brother of Simon Peter, you heard John the Baptist say: “Behold the Lamb of God,” and you chose to follow Jesus. Leaving your nets, you became a successful fisher of souls. Lover of the Crucified Christ, you too were crucified like him. Teach us to live and suffer for Him and to win many souls for Christ. Amen.

Agata Pawlowska
CSMA Office, Poland

Angels inspiring resolute, unwavering endurance

***For you created my inmost being;
You knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden from you
When I was made in the secret place,
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw my unformed body;
All the days ordained for me were written in your book
Before one of them came to be.***

Psalm 139.13-16



Lena Maria prayed the words of this psalm almost daily, finding in it inner strength and a source of hope, given that she had to face major obstacles in life, having been born with no arms and one leg much shorter than the other.

Surrounded by loving parents

Lena Maria was born in Sweden, as the first child to young parents. Her father worked in the police and her mother was a physiotherapist. It is easy to imagine their shock at having such a disabled child. Fortunately, they were practising Christians, being Presbyterians and people of strong faith. When the baby's father returned from the hospital, he fell down on his knees and prayed. He

entrusted to God his little daughter and the future of his family. Although the doctors had said that they could place their daughter in a home for disabled children, they decided right away that they would bring her up at home. The girl's father made this decision quite clear: "Arms or no arms, she will need a home anyway". The family then took the decision to leave the town of 20,000 inhabitants where they stayed and moved to the country, to an area rich in lakes and forests, in order to bring her up in a healthy environment.

Lena loved singing and dancing. She was able to dance, thanks to a special prosthesis. Recalling her childhood, Lena said that she had a pretty good start in life, thanks to the healthy country air and the good times she spent there playing with her younger brother. This was particularly with thanks to her parents

who gave her plenty of time to find out how to cope in a variety of situations on her own. Her parents did not prevent her from disappointment. She had an opportunity to cope with success and failure."

Lena liked school, although, obviously, she encountered many new difficulties. She felt unhappy at times, but only because she did not have a best friend. In primary school, many of the girls went about with their best friends, something Lena never had. She would, sometimes, come home in tears and ask her mother why nobody wanted to be best friends with her. Her mother would usually explain that, because she still required so much help and assistance, the other children found it hard to cope with this. Although she understood, Lena would still sometimes feel sad. But she learnt the lesson that she should learn to play with a variety of children. In that way,

a number of different people would help her with certain necessary tasks. This later led to her making many acquaintances and friendships.

Experiencing closeness to God

On one particular day, when Lena was walking in the woods with friends, something suddenly cracked in her left hip and she felt a horrendous pain. Fortunately, her father was near and carried her the 2km distance home. She had to spend 2 years in a wheelchair after that. The only part of her body which she could move was her head and the only activity which she could do was to read.

The Bible became her favourite reading matter. It is hard to explain, but in her childish way, she simply knew that God was with her. This faith had been passed on to her by her parents, for whom God's presence was as natural as the air they breathed. God was, for them, somebody whom you could trust completely, both when things were going well and also when you faced difficulties. Lena Maria would, in the future, say of herself: "Thanks to my faith, God gave me a tremendous sense of security and when I was twelve and thirteen, this faith became even stronger. Faith became a natural part of my existence."

The effect of such loving parents, who instilled such strong faith in her, is remarkable. Thanks to those priceless values, Lena Maria finished secondary school and later, her music studies at the conservatory in Stockholm. During this period, she also took part in the world championships in Gothenberg, winning a gold medal in the 150m breast stroke. A

year later, representing Sweden at the European championships in France, she gained four gold medals in four different events, also beating the world record for butterfly stroke. Motivated not so much by a desire to succeed, as by a desire to travel and experience the camaraderie between contestants, during her stay at the various training camps and championships. She was sometimes asked why she did not feel anger and bitterness at her disability, but could instead help others by being ready to listen to them and sharing their difficulties and experiences.

In 1989, she took part in the Paralympics in Seoul, South Korea. The planning and the publicity for this event in the press and television had been excellent. Unfortunately, the event in which Lena Maria had most hoped to succeed, the 25m butterfly stroke, was withdrawn. She did, however, achieve 4th place in the backstroke, 5th in freestyle and 6th in breaststroke. She was, by then, very tired of training, and wanted to devote herself solely to music and singing.

Wholly devoted to music

In an interview, Lena Maria said that: "Music and singing were a natural part of who I was, from my earliest years." Both of her parents, as well as many of her relatives, liked to sing and play various musical instruments. When she was 9 years old, she started taking music lessons at a public music school and then carried these on at secondary school. She then continued her music studies at the conservatory in Stockholm, where she was lucky to have very good teachers, such as the singer, Lene Ericsson, who constantly repeated to her, that "Music is feeling". Lena trained her voice under Lene Ericsson's guidance in order to be able to arouse emotions in her listeners. Soon, she was able to express her faith in song and so began a new chapter in her life, when Lena Maria began to give concerts around Sweden as well as abroad. She wanted to share her



faith with others. To deepen her own faith, she continued to pray and read the Bible. Her faith had a yet surer foundation. She experienced God's closeness and help, God performing small miracles in her daily life.

She set out into the world, giving concerts. She visited Japan and the United States several times, as well as India. In one particular year, she had given 56 performances in the States in a two month period, singing mainly in churches. Totally exhausted, in one interview she said that: "Throughout my entire life, I have desired to carry-out what God expects of me. I know that everything will then turn out well." She was spellbound by Japan. She said that "Japan will always have an important place in my heart. I believe that I was able to convince many there to change their attitudes to disabled people, and may also have helped them to understand the significance of the Christian faith in this."

On 1 July, 1995, Lena Maria was married. The wedding took place at the Gustavus Vasa Church in Stockholm, in the presence of 800 guests.

Faith as a natural part of life

Lena Maria once received a letter from Japan, which said: "Thank you for being who you are. If you were simply an average person you could now be sitting in a wheelchair, in an institution. What a zest you have for life! We all wonder how it is possible that you manage to retain such a positive attitude to life, that you have managed to achieve success in so many fields, despite all the obstacles in your way?" Lena Maria replied, quite sincerely, that: "Firstly, I must say that I

have always been someone who has been happy and interested in life. I see myself in positive terms. I am stubborn. My disability has meant that this stubbornness has expressed itself in the right way. Secondly, I had wonderful parents. Their calm attitude to me and to my disability was very important. It gave me a feeling of security. Thirdly, the most important reason for my positive attitude to life is most certainly God! As far as I can remember, faith has been a natural part of my life. As a Christian, I knew that I was of value, regardless of who I was and how I looked. I am happy that I am alive, and that I can sing. I have a husband, a wonderful family and friends who help me when I encounter difficulties in life. Above all else, I have God. He loves me and I know that nothing can take this love from me" (L.M. Klingvall, "Footnotes: A Life Without Limits").

Lena Maria's example reminds us of the priceless value of each human life and of the fact that it is easier for people of faith to understand the truth of this. They are better capable of protecting it and to develop it creatively. This is important at a time when godless people threaten human life in a variety of ways, particularly by means of abortion and euthanasia, or by threatening the family and its very structure.

Holy Angels, God entrusts the life of each human person to your care. Hasten to aid us, particularly when we encounter the heavy cross of suffering, illness and disability, whether congenital or acquired. Maintain in us a spirit of faith and an unshakeable will to remain close to God, who is the only source of all true happiness. Amen.

Father **Henryk Skoczylas** CSMA

History of the Angelic Chaplet

The history of this Chaplet comes from a devout Servant of God, Antonia d'Astonac, who had a vision of St Michael. He told Antonia to honour him by nine salutations to the nine Choirs of Angels. St Michael promised that whoever would practice this devotion in his honour would have, when approaching Holy Communion, an escort of nine angels chosen from each of the nine Choirs.

In addition, for those who would recite the chaplet daily, he promised his continual assistance and that of all the holy angels during life. Praying the chaplet is also believed gradually to defeat demons and grant a 'pure heart' thus delivering members of the direct family from Purgatory. These blessings extend to all those praying. The vision was approved by Pope Pius IX in 1851 and was granted indulgences.



First devotional Knight of St Michael the Archangel in Ireland

On 27th July 2013, Mr Carl Gray became the first devotional Knight of St Michael the Archangel after a trial period. An admittance ceremony was held in Co. Mayo by the General Animator, Fr Peter Prusakiewicz from the Congregation of St Michael the Archangel in Poland.

Carl, a soldier from the First Infantry Battalion in Signals, has had a devotion to St Michael the Archangel for some time and was inspired to become a Knight of St Michael after hearing Fr Peter Prusakiewicz give a talk in Ireland.

Knights of St Michael are expected to carry out certain obligations.

Daily: Bible reading, saying the exorcism prayer and the angelic chaplet to St Michael.

Weekly: Fast each Friday on bread and water (or a good deed if a fast is impossible).

Monthly: Reconciliation and Eucharist Adoration.

Annually: Pray the nine day Novena to St Michael before the feast day on 29th September.

Devotional Knights are people of quiet prayer. During a trial period of three months the candidate should follow all the rules of this devotion. Many knights read *The Angels* magazine to gain more knowledge on the spirituality of the angels.

The main task of the knights is to proclaim the victory of Jesus Christ over Satan. The knights are on a mission to expiate God for the sins of humankind and to obtain the conversion of sinners. They aim to achieve this by reciting the prayer of St Michael the Archangel to defend us in the day of battle. This simple prayer of exorcism every day is to guard each individual, the Church and the whole world from evil, particularly those that are tempted by Satan.

The knights are confirmed Catholics, who are open to the Holy Spirit and give themselves to Christ, unite with Him, and help the Church by keeping demons away from Her. The main duty of knights is the continuous effort to be in a state of grace and in friendship with God so they can exclaim about Satan: "He has no power over me" (John 14:30). All knights must respect the Holy Father, bishops and priests and all the teachings of the Church.

An attitude of humility and obedience towards God and the Church should be an obvious feature of every knight. Any Catholic man or woman who desires to become a knight is required to follow the rules of this devotion.

To help one another, knights say a prayer for each other every day. The General Animator celebrates Gregorian Masses each November for



all deceased knights after he receives information about their death. Many devotional knights read *The Angels* "Messengers from a loving God" magazine to gain more knowledge on the spirituality of the angels and the Divine Mercy.

For further information on the Devotional Knights of St Michael please contact me personally by letter or email redakcja.kjb@gmail.com.

Father **Piotr Prusakiewicz** CSMA
General Animator of the Knighthood
Congregation of St Michael the Archangel
Ul. Pilsudskiego 250, 05-261 Marki
Warsaw, Poland

Christmas Prayer of Pope John XXIII

O sweet Child of Bethlehem, grant that we may share with all our hearts in this profound mystery of Christmas. Put into the hearts of men and women this peace for which they sometimes seek so desperately and which you alone can give to them. Help them to know one another better, and to live as brothers and sisters, children of the same Father. Reveal to them also your beauty, holiness and purity. Awaken in their hearts love and gratitude for your infinite goodness. Join them all together in your love and give us your heavenly peace. Amen.



We are the offspring of the Virgin Mary

Through Her trust and total reliance upon God, Mary stands in complete opposition to Satan who had shown disobedience to God.

The Prince of Darkness hates Mary because of Her humility, but at the same time, is afraid of Her. She is the only one who does not listen to and succumb to his lies. Through Her love and obedience to God, She takes part in the destruction of Satan's evil plans. That is why Satan will continue to attack Mary and Her children with such hatred and venom, so as to poison and destroy Her work. Already at the very beginning, following the original sin, it was announced that the Son of a woman would crush a serpent's head but that the serpent would crush His foot; the latter fact, no doubt refers to Satan's continued attacks on the body of Christ, that is on the Church: "Then the dragon was enraged with the woman and went away to make war on the rest of her children that is, all who obey God's commandments and bear witness for Jesus" (Rv 12:17).

Attack focuses on the woman

This apocalyptic vision is not only a simple parable, but an image of the real battle which from the very beginning is taking place in human history. The main thrust of this fierce battle is directed against Mary as it was thanks to Her that "The One" who conquered death had come into the world. This struggle is becoming more and more intense, as Satan is aware that his days are numbered (Rv 12:12). We may ask how Satan fights with the Virgin and Her offspring today and what methods he resorts to in these contemporary times? Today, Satan's attack focuses on the woman and on those values which were important to Mary. We can easily convince ourselves that it is alright to absorb the current views by resorting to some powerful means, such as the



■ Adoration of the Child by Gerrit van Honthorst, c.1622

mass media, Satan tries to ridicule certain Christian concepts, such as the idea of virginity and motherhood, as well as the very institution of marriage.

Threat against life

Mary was a virgin; She was a mother and the spouse of St Joseph. She lived in a family in which Jesus was able to grow up and mature safely until His mission could be fulfilled. Hence, the threat to the concepts of family, virginity and motherhood is so serious, as it is precisely thanks to these values that man is able to fulfill God's plan and realise his calling to eternal life. One cannot reconcile these values with the Devil's wayward plan to attack everything that is connected with life, one's well-being and with faith; for the Devil is death and he rejoices to see man

plunge into hell. His attack is directed primarily against life. It is very easy to recognise this ideology which is aimed against life and all in the name of protecting the woman's freedom; namely, it is often argued that the woman has a right to determine her plight, in other words that she has a right to kill. Contemporary society often accepts this way of reasoning. At that moment the woman loses her sense of conscience and the mother is often left broken and damaged. Let us pray for expectant mothers for a safe delivery and all mothers throughout world.

As we approach Christmas we think of the new-born baby Jesus in the manger with our blessed Mother and Joseph. May we rejoice in the birth of our Lord and Saviour on Christmas Day.

God bless you.

Fr **Peter Prusakiewicz** CSMA

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The sacrament of healing

**Overloaded with work? Physically exhausted?
Difficult relationships? Depressed with your weaknesses?**

**Do not worry! Jesus Christ offers you the best cure of all:
His unconditional love and forgiveness. Will you give Him a chance?**



1420 Through the sacraments of Christian initiation, man receives the new life of Christ. Now we carry this life “in earthen vessels,” and it remains “hidden with Christ in God.” We are still in our “earthly tent,” subject to suffering, illness and death. This new life as a child of God can be weakened and even lost by sin.

1421 The Lord Jesus Christ, physician of our souls and bodies, who forgave the sins of the paralytic and restored him to bodily health, has willed that his Church continue, in the power of the Holy Spirit, his work of healing and salvation, even among Her own members. This is the purpose of the two sacraments of healing: the sacrament of Penance and the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.

The sacrament of forgiveness

1440 Sin is before all else an offence against God, a rupture of communion with him. At the same time it damages communion with the Church. For this

reason conversion entails both God’s forgiveness and reconciliation with the Church, which are expressed and accomplished liturgically by the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

Only God forgives sin

1441 Only God forgives sins. Since He is the Son of God, Jesus says of Himself, “The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins” and exercises this divine power: “Your sins are forgiven.” Further, by virtue of his divine authority he gives this power to men to exercise in his name.

1442 Christ has willed that in her prayer and life and action his whole Church should be the sign and instrument of the forgiveness and reconciliation that he acquired for us at the price of his blood. But he entrusted the exercise of the power of absolution to the apostolic ministry which he charged with the “ministry of reconciliation”. The apostle is sent out “on behalf of Christ” with “God making his appeal” through him and pleading: “Be reconciled to God.”

1443 During his public life Jesus not only forgave sins, but also made plain the effect of this forgiveness: he reintegrated forgiven sinners into the community of the People of God from which sin had alienated or even excluded them. A remarkable sign of this is the fact that Jesus receives sinners at his table, a gesture that expresses in an astonishing way both God’s forgiveness and the return to the bosom of the People of God.

1444 In imparting to his apostles his own power to forgive sins the Lord also gives them the authority to reconcile sinners with the Church. This ecclesial dimension of their task is expressed most notably in Christ’s solemn words to Simon Peter: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Mt 16:19 “The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of the apostles united to its head.” LG 22 # 2.

1445 The words bind and loose mean: whomever you exclude from



■ Christ with Mary and Martha by Henry Semiradsky, 1886

your communion, will be excluded from communion with God; whom ever you receive anew into your communion, God will welcome back into his. Reconciliation with the Church is inseparable from reconciliation with God.

Lost baptismal grace

1446 Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as “the second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace.” *Tertullian, De Paenit. 4, 2*

1447 Over the centuries the concrete form in which the Church has exercised this power received from the Lord has varied considerably. During the first centuries the reconciliation of

Christians who had committed particularly grave sins after their Baptism (for example, idolatry, murder, or adultery) was tied to a very rigorous discipline, according to which penitents had to do public penance for their sins, often for years, before receiving reconciliation. To this “order of penitents” (which concerned only certain grave sins), one was only rarely admitted and in certain regions only once in a lifetime. During the seventh century Irish missionaries, inspired by the Eastern monastic tradition, took to continental Europe the “private” practice of penance, which does not require public and prolonged completion of penitential works before reconciliation with the Church. From that time on, the sacrament has been performed in secret between penitent and priest. This new practice envisioned the possibility of repetition and so opened the way to a regular frequenting of this sacrament. It allowed the forgiveness of grave sins and venial sins to be integrated into one sacramental celebration. In its main lines this is the form of penance that the Church has practiced down to our day.

Action of the Holy Spirit

1448 Beneath the changes in discipline and celebration that this sacrament has undergone over the centuries, the same fundamental structure is to be discerned. It comprises two equally essential elements: on the one hand, the acts of the man who undergoes conversion through the action of the Holy Spirit: namely, contrition, confession and satisfaction; on the other, God’s action through the intervention of the Church. The Church, who through the bishop and his priests forgives sins in the name of Jesus Christ and determines the manner of satisfaction, also prays for the sinner and does penance with him. Thus the sinner is healed and re-established in ecclesial communion.

1449 The formula of absolution used in the Latin Church expresses the essential elements of this sacrament: the Father of mercies is the source of all forgiveness. He effects the reconciliation of sinners through the Passover of his Son and the gift of his Spirit, through the prayer and ministry of the Church: *God, the Father of mercies, through the death and the resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

1455 The confession (or disclosure) of sins, even from a simply human point of view, frees us and facilitates our reconciliation with

others. Through such an admission man looks squarely at the sins he is guilty of, takes responsibility for them, and thereby opens himself again to God and to the communion of the Church in order to make a new future possible.

Sins wound the soul

1456 Confession to a priest is an essential part of the sacrament of Penance: “All mortal sins of which penitents after a diligent self-examination are conscious must be recounted by them in confession, even if they are most secret and have been committed against the last two precepts of the Decalogue; for these sins sometimes wound the soul more

grievously and are more dangerous than those which are committed openly.” *Council of Trent (1551)*

When Christ’s faithful strive to confess all the sins that they can remember, they undoubtedly place all of them before the divine mercy for pardon. But those who fail to do so and knowingly withhold some, place nothing before the divine goodness for remission through the mediation of the priest, “for if the sick person is too ashamed to show his wound to the doctor, the medicine cannot heal what it does not know.” *Council of Trent (1551)*

1457 According to the Church’s command, “after having attained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year.” Anyone who is aware of having committed a mortal sin must not receive Holy Communion, even if he experiences deep contrition, without having first received sacramental absolution, unless he has a grave reason for receiving Communion and there is no possibility of going to confession. Children must go to the sacrament of Penance before receiving Holy Communion for the first time.

Conscience

1458 Without being strictly necessary, confession of everyday faults (venial sins) is nevertheless strongly recommended by the Church. Indeed the regular confession of our venial sins helps us form our conscience, fight against evil tendencies, let ourselves be healed by Christ and progress in the life of the Spirit. By receiving more frequently through this sacrament the gift of the Father’s mercy, we are spurred to be merciful as he

is merciful: “Whoever confesses his sins... is already working with God. God indicts your sins; if you also indict them, you are joined with God. Man and sinner are, so to speak, two realities: when you hear “man” - this is what God has made; when you hear “sinner” - this is what man himself has made. Destroy what you have made, so that God may save what he has made ... When you begin to abhor what you have made, it is then that your good works are beginning, since you are accusing yourself of your evil works. The beginning of good works is the confession of evil works. You do the truth and come to the light.” *St. Augustine, In Jo. ev. 12, 13: PL 35, 1491.*

Sins wrong our neighbour

1459 Many sins wrong our neighbour. One must do what is possible in order to repair the harm (e.g., return stolen goods, restore the reputation of someone slandered, pay compensation for injuries). Simple justice requires as much. But sin also injures and weakens the sinner himself, as well as his relationships with God and neighbour. Absolution takes away sin, but it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused. Raised up from sin, the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends for the sin: he must “make satisfaction for” or “expiate” his sins. This satisfaction is also called “penance”.

1460 The penance the confessor imposes must take into account the penitent’s personal situation and must seek his spiritual good. It must correspond as far as possible with the



gravity and nature of the sins committed. It can consist of prayer, an offering, works of mercy, service to a neighbour, voluntary self-denial, sacrifices, and above all the patient acceptance of the cross we must bear. Such penances help configure us to Christ, who alone expiated our sins once and for all. They allow us to become co-heirs with the risen Christ, “provided we suffer with him.”

The satisfaction that we make for our sins, however, is not so much ours as though it were not done through Jesus Christ. We who can do nothing ourselves, as if just by ourselves, can do all things with the cooperation of “him who strengthens” us. Thus man has nothing of which to boast, but all our boasting is in Christ... in whom we make satisfaction by bringing forth “fruits that befit repentance.” These fruits have their efficacy from him, by him they are offered to the Father, and through him they are accepted by the Father. *Council of Trent (1551)*

God’s grace

1468 “The whole power of the sacrament of Penance consists in restoring us to God’s grace and joining us with him in an intimate friendship.” Reconciliation with God is thus the purpose and effect of this sacrament. For those who receive the sacrament of Penance with contrite heart and religious disposition, reconciliation “is usually followed by peace and serenity of conscience with strong spiritual consolation.” Indeed the sacrament of Reconciliation with God brings about a true “spiritual resurrection”, restoration of the dignity and blessings of the life of the children of God, of which the most precious is friendship with God.

Sin injures and weakens

1469 This sacrament reconciles us with the Church. Sin damages or even breaks fraternal communion. The sacrament of Penance repairs or restores it. In this sense it does not simply heal the one restored to ecclesial communion, but has also a revitalising effect on the life of the Church which suffered from the sin of one of her members. Re-established or strengthened in the communion of saints, the sinner is made stronger by the exchange of spiritual goods among all the living members of the Body of Christ, whether still on pilgrimage or already in the heavenly homeland:

“It must be recalled that... this reconciliation with God leads, as it were, to other reconciliations, which repair the other breaches caused by sin. The forgiven penitent is reconciled with himself in his inmost being, where he regains his innermost truth. He is reconciled with his brethren whom he has in some way offended and wounded. He is reconciled with the Church. He is reconciled with all creation.” *John Paul II, RP 31, 5.*

1470 In this sacrament, the sinner, placing himself before the merciful judgment of God, anticipates in a certain way the judgment to which he will be subjected at the end of his earthly life. For it is now, in this life, that we are offered the choice between life and death, and it is only by the road of conversion that we can enter the Kingdom, from which one is excluded by grave sin. In converting to Christ through penance and faith, the sinner passes from death to life and “does not come into judgment.”

Taken from the Catechism of the Catholic Church



Confession – the source of Divine Mercy

“The soul gives the greatest glory to its Creator when it turns with trust to the Divine Mercy.”

Diary 930

“Every time you go to confession, immerse yourself entirely in My mercy, with great trust, so that I may pour the bounty of My grace upon your soul. When you approach the confessional, know this, that I Myself am waiting there for you. Tell souls that from this fount of mercy [confession] souls draw graces solely with the vessel of trust. If their trust is great, there is no limit to My generosity.”

Diary 1602

“Let the weak, sinful soul have no fear to approach Me, for even if it had more sins than there are grains of sand in the world, all would be drowned in the immeasurable depths of My mercy.”

Diary 1059

St Faustina the maid

Recollections of Aldona Lipszycowa, the employer of St Faustina before she entered the convent.

In 1924, my husband and I lived with our four children in Ostrowka village in the district of Radzymin. My husband asked the parish priest of St James' church in Ochota to find someone to help me in the house. Canon Jakub Dabrowski had earlier been the parish priest in Klembow and was friendly with my husband. He had baptised my husband, married us and baptised each of our children.

Canon Dabrowski sent us Helena ("Hela") Kowalska with a note, saying that he did not know her personally and hoped that she would be suitable. This was in the summer of 1924. Hela came to us with a little bundle (she literally had all her worldly goods which she had brought from her parents' home wrapped-up in a shawl). She gave us the impression of being bright, healthy, even cheerful. She had straight red hair, worn in a thick plait and was agreeable and pleasant and had quite a freckled face.

I recall that she told me that she had left her family home as she wanted to enter a convent. She had gone into the first church which she found on reaching Warsaw. This was the church of St James, where she had met Canon Dabrowski, who had directed her to us. I cannot remember if

she had attempted to enter a convent before coming to us, and had been told to bring a dowry, or if the canon had alerted her to the fact that this would be necessary.

The Concealed Jesus

So, she came to us with a note from the parish priest and a desire to earn the money for a dowry, with the intention of entering a convent as soon as she had earned sufficient money for the purpose. I recall that she spent absolutely no money on herself and put all of the money aside for the dowry. She was good-natured, she liked children and played with them. I remember her playing a dressing-up game with the children, dressing-up herself and playing like a child. I recall her healthy, joyful laugh. She sang a lot and I associate her with the hymn "The Concealed Jesus" which I learned from her, and which includes the words "I honour Jesus, concealed in the Sacrament (of the Eucharist), I give my life for Him, live by His love. He gives Himself

completely and has dwelt here among us. For His Divine glory, let us devote our lives to Him." Now that I discover more about her, I realise that this hymn sums-up her life.

Hard working

She was hard-working. She carried out every task by herself, willingly and did not have to be reminded. She was liked and respected by all of us. She did not impose her piety on anyone and I do not recall her giving any sign of it other than her singing religious songs while she worked. Although we were aware from the start that she would leave us to enter the convent, we nevertheless became very attached to her during that year, so that her leaving us was, for me, a very traumatic event. I do not recall the date on which she left us, other than the fact that it was in the summer of 1925.



On leaving us, Hela asked me to visit her, and, at the same time, to see her Superior, who had asked for such a meeting. I knew that she had entered a convent in Zytnia Street, but did not know the name of the congregation. Not long after she left us, and while looking for her on that street, I visited a particular convent.

Humiliated

I asked to see the Superior, who had apparently wished to find out more about Helena from me. I said that I had come to give a good reference for a girl who had worked for me as a maid, and who had now entered the convent. The Sister who spoke to me was indignant that a candidate who had already been accepted, had misled them and had not admitted that she had been a servant, as the rule of the congregation, which consisted of only one choir, did not allow acceptance to those who had been servants. I had initially attempted to explain that Helena had not been a servant by profession, and had simply been a village girl who had worked for a time in order to earn the money for her dowry. When I heard the accusation that she had cheated them, I became indignant and angrily contradicted this, saying that “Helena would not have lied. I have probably come to the wrong place and she is not here.”

I asked if there was another convent nearby, and was directed to the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. That was where Helena actually was. Helena was overjoyed that I had come. Before seeing Helena, I spoke with the Superior, who thanked me very much for the good references and opinion of Helena that I gave her.

I later spoke with Helena herself, in the presence of another sister. It was obvious to me that Helena wished to speak to me alone. Taking advantage of the momentary absence of the sister, while seeing me to the door, she told me that things were hard for her, that she found it difficult to accustom herself to the restrictions imposed by the Rule, such as the silence and having to walk slowly all the time, and that she was unable to defend herself when wrongly accused of something. I remember that she told me of some matter where it was intended to train her in humility, she had to put up with being humiliated in front of everyone, despite being innocent of the incident of which she was being accused.

All this made a depressing impression on me. I said to her: “Helena, for God’s sake, you have entered God’s service and yet cannot be yourself and tell the whole truth. Leave all this and come back.” We were unable to speak any more.

A great grace from God

I saw Hela once again for the last time, when, at my own request, and with the permission of her superiors, she visited me in Rakowiecka Street, where I then lived. That was in 1926. Hela burst into our house and began to speak of her experiences, loudly, joyfully and candidly. She was with another sister, and was on her way back from a visit to the dentist. Once again, I noticed how much she had changed and how hard things were for her. I asked her to come back to us, if she felt that this was not her path in life. I remember her reply:

“Things are hard for me, but I feel a great grace from God, so that I can bear everything.” She then told me that she was going to the novitiate in Krakow, but that, if she was unable to endure it, she would then return to me. She told me that she had been working in the kitchen, and had learnt a lot here, so that, if she returned, she would be able to cook many nice things for the children.

All the memories are very fresh and vivid in my mind. I have thought and spoken about Helena on many occasions in the course of my life.

My children, who are now adults, were too young to remember Helena from her time with us. However, they clearly recall what I told them about my meeting with Helena, when I said that “Helena could not have lied.”

Deep impression on me

Very recently, that is, in the spring of this year (1952), I heard from Sr. Katarzyna from Laski, about the events of Helena’s later life and of the revelations about the Divine Mercy. This made a very deep impression on me, and I told my neighbours in the village about it. Apolonia Kurkowa, who lives in Lipna, in the Radzymin district, told me that she remembered Helena well, and the fact that she had entered a convent. She had met her in my house and they would go together to church in Klembowo, and she would visit Helena afterwards at my house. Of Helena, she said; “That was a great girl!”

Aldona Lipszycowa

Warsaw, 1952

Taken from *Oredzie Milosierdzia*

Danger of de-demonising the demon

Evil does exist. It is so easy to ignore the presence of it in our midst. It manifests itself in many forms; from the way people behave towards each other which can be expressed in violence, manipulation, hatred, prejudice as well as in poverty, injustice and persecution. Evil can be quite subtle and hidden, almost passing us by or going in the guise of a thousand different covers.

We live in a world where images are placed before us, which slowly but surely remove our objections and become so matter of fact that we hardly notice them.

The erosion of modesty and decency is an area where this is most evident. This is also true in our laws which demand of us a consensus which we cannot always comply with. Areas of concern are the proposed laws relating to marriage, which distort and undermine the Sacrament as being between a man and a woman. But there are so many others. Evil, not just a negative, an absence of good but it exists in the hearts of those who distort truth and whose aim is not to honour the Creator in His creation, us, but to destroy it.

We have finished the month dedicated to the Holy Souls. Souls awaiting perfection before they see the Saviour who saved and spared them. These are Holy Souls – not evil ones.

The feast of Halloween was a preparation for the great celebration of

All Saints day, Hallowed, 'Halo-ed' all Holy- men and women who were part of the Communion of Saints. What a distortion it has become with ghosts and ghouls, spirits and witches. How far has this been hijacked by images inappropriate to the feast. Now you may say it is harmless stuff, a bit of fun? Maybe, if you have a secure understanding, but this is not so today for many people...

In many countries, the idea behind any form of Halloween is to remember those beyond the grave, those who are in heaven and those destined to go there. Instead, we make idols and images of things which are not of Heaven.

Sucked into a dark culture

In recent years, the bookshops and libraries carry more books on witchcraft, the occult or 'spirituality' than

on the Gospels or prayers. More and more people are being sucked into a culture that deals with darkness rather than light... Is it an accident, or error that Jesus' own prayer to the Father 'The Our Father' - ends with *deliver us from Evil*? Jesus has no doubt about the existence of evil in action, but also of the existence of the evil one, Satan. How he, Satan, must smile when people deny his existence and become prey to his wiles.

More and more people are playing with fire as they go to the spiritualists, mediums, play with tarot cards and ouija boards, not to mention horoscopes, often seen as another bit of fun...

Only God knows the future

But the future is known only to God, and we are at the very least, imprudent, though actually forbidden to enter this realm. Why are these things



forbidden? Because it is in the realm of Faith and Trust and the powers of Goodness that we have to live. If we seek out the revelation of the future in dark places we cannot be certain who or what is being presented to us. Further, Satan, the author of lies, is waiting for us to turn from God to these things, which take us away from truth and dependence on God to an arrogant certainty which lessens our dependence on Him. Satan is a 'person' not a symbol – he hides in the dark places of despair and negativity, doubt and distortion. Jesus had to reject Satan as we do too at baptism, and by the light of the Paschal Candle at Easter. These are not mere words but fundamental truths. We must be on our guard against his deceptions – as was Jesus Himself.

'In the last petition 'but deliver us from Evil', Christians pray to God, with the Church to show the victory already won by Christ over the ruler of this world, Satan, the angel personally opposed to God and His plan of

Salvation' (Page 610 Catechism of the Catholic Church).

Jesus is victorious

So, Jesus is victorious in all things. He has overcome Satan. We pray, therefore, to be delivered from the evils past, present and to come, of which Satan is the instigator. We are joined by all the Saints who are already before the throne of God and who have had to do battle with Satan. Saints such as Bartolomeo Longo, who was a Satanist, but who rejected Satan and his works and became holy, and died in the service of the poor. We pray also for those who are waiting to enter fully into the realm of Heaven, whose journey is slow and interrupted through sin and imperfect understanding which led them to compromise and not choose the better path. We must pray for the Holy Souls. There are many ways that we can do this. We can offer up the intention in the Mass for a particular person, or

have Masses said on a person's behalf. We can pray the Rosary or use special prayers; however, we must not forget that our suffering can be efficacious in helping them.

Holy Souls

It may also be advantageous to read a little more about the Holy Souls and books such as 'The Holy Souls' (Frate Alessio Parente OFMCap) a friend of St Padre Pio, can be very enlightening.

One wonderful suggestion is to adopt a priest or religious who has had an impact on our life; who maybe baptised us, gave us Holy Communion, presided at our marriage, was a good confessor, gave us counsel when troubled, was present at the death of a loved one, or whose preaching touched us. We must not, however, forget the many Saints who continue to pray for us and we must be very grateful for the paths they chose that lead them to sanctity. In November we not only celebrated 'All Saints' but also celebrated the lives of many British Saints. Thus we have St Winefride, St Illtud, Bl John Duns Scotus, St Margaret of Scotland, St Hugh of Lincoln and St Hilda. It was also the feast of St Albert the Great, St Cecilia, SS Andrew Dung-Lac and companions (of Korea), St Catherine Labouré, not to mention the Presentation of Our Lady and the Feast of Christ the King. A beautiful Prayer taken from the Divine Office is as follows: *"Through the pastors of Your Church You give your sheep eternal life, and no-one can steal them from You – Save the faithful departed, for whom You laid down Your life. Lord, save Your people."*

Halina Holman

Taken from "Encouragement" issue 16
www.thehostapostolate.org

Dangers of New Age

Reiki – occult powers

Reiki (the channeling of “universal life force energies” for the purposes of purification and healing through the hands of a therapist who serves as a healing medium) is one of many occult healing methods. All such practices entailing esoteric rituals and techniques (magic) are dangerous in that they bring us into contact with an invisible world that is forbidden to man. In seeking, even with the best of intentions, to control spiritual and material reality through the harnessing of occult powers and knowledge, we open ourselves up to the action of evil spirits. All magical practices flow from Satan’s rebellion and sin of disobedience to God. The practice of magic amounts to a kind of pact with the devil, and it is this that enables all kinds of clairvoyants and healers to command spectacular powers of divination and healing.

The Church condemns the occult

The Church unequivocally condemns occult healing practices. “All practices of magic or sorcery, by which one attempts to tame occult powers, so as to place them at one’s service, and have a supernatural power over others - even if this were for the sake of restoring their health - are gravely contrary to the virtue of religion. These practices



are even more to be condemned when accompanied by the intention of harming someone, or when they have recourse to the intervention of demons. Wearing charms is also reprehensible. Spiritism often implies divination or magical practices; the Church for her part warns the faithful against it. Recourse to so-called traditional cures does not justify either the invocation of evil powers or the exploitation of another’s credulity” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2117).

Jesus can heal us

Only Jesus can truly heal. When we accept Him as the one Lord of our life, He can always heal us spiritually and

sometimes, when He wills it, physically as well. When we are united with Jesus through faith, we also experience suffering and illness as an expression of His grace and a way to salvation. One of our readers, a seventy-eight-year-old woman, writes: “I have been suffering from pain in my legs for almost twenty years. Now, with the aid of a cane, I can only get around in the house. My grandson drives me to church. But I cherish this pain as my greatest treasure. When it gets worse, I thank God for His goodness. I have a large family, with grand- and great grandchildren. Everyone can draw from this bountiful spring, which never runs dry.”

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The choice is yours

In the Gospel of St Luke, Christ shows two paths that people may follow: the way of God and the way of Satan.

There were no witnesses when Jesus was tempted in the desert. Christ Himself related that experience in His public teaching and bared evil deceitful tactics.

Satan knows all the hungers of human hearts. He even dares to use a natural physiological hunger, a very basic human need: “After fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. The tempter came to Him and said, ‘If You are the Son of God,’ tell these stones to become bread” (Matthew 4:3-4).

The next temptation concerns the hunger of our own vain glory. Satan persuades Christ to prove His greatness by throwing Himself down so that angels could catch Him: “Then the devil took Him to the holy city and had Him stand on the highest point of the temple. ‘If You are the Son of God,’ he said, ‘throw Yourself down.’ For it is written: He will command His angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone” (Mt 4: 5-6).

Another trick is about the hunger of material goods and the power over others: “Again the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. ‘All this I will give you,’ he said” (Mt 4:8-9).

Satan offers to satisfy all our needs and desires. The price is one: “You will bow down and worship me” (Mt 4:9).

In the desert not only does Jesus uncover evil temptations but shows how to win them as well. When hungry, He proposes a tenable fast of the body to feed the soul: “Man shall not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4).

When searching for our glory, Jesus asks us to fulfil God’s will. When hungry of material goods, the Lord wants us to accept what we have. When in temptation of controlling other people, Christ gives obedience to God as a condition of genuine freedom: “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord, your God, and serve Him only’” (Mt 4:10).

The choice is ours. We may follow either Jesus’ plan or Satan’s one. We need to make a decision. St Paul in his letter to the Romans explains that the decision means to say publicly that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Master and to acknowledge that our earthly life is just a pilgrimage to eternal happiness. If we remember that, earthly goods and values will not captivate us. We may live on earth according to Jesus’ plan for us. He also lived on earth, subject to God’s plan.



■ Denying Satan by Carl Bloch, 1850

Nowadays there are numerous people who do not believe either in God or in Satan. They believe in themselves and fulfil their own will. Satan is extremely glad that people do not believe in him. It is easier for him to tie them with spiritual bonds.

God never fits His will to human will affected by original sin. He waits for our decision to choose His plan and to fulfil it with love.

Fr Edward Staniek, Poland

A Short Prayer

Lord help me to remember that nothing is going to happen to me today that You and I together cannot handle. Amen.

St Michael (part 1) and the Popes

On 9th September 1962, speaking in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels and the Martyrs in the Baths of Diocletian in Rome, Pope John XXIII reminded us that we are not alone. He very clearly illustrated the role played by the guardian angels in our lives. He wrote: “Just as God creates a soul for each new human being, so also an angel from among the heavenly host is called to remain at that person’s side during the whole of their earthly pilgrimage.”

The angels are also present in their role as guardians at the moment that a new pope is chosen. According to revelations granted to a certain saint, “at the moment of the election of a new pope, the Lord sends down twelve angels to assist him in carrying out his ministry.” The number twelve is notable here, reminding us of the twelve apostles who supported Jesus in His public ministry. In a similar way, twelve heavenly spirits support and guide the pope in worthily carrying out the duties of his office.

This is clearly not the only form of angelic support and guidance experienced by the successors of St Peter. The popes have frequently turned to the Invincible Prince, The Archangel Michael, at moments of greatest threat, in particular to the city of Rome. This was similar to the situation of St Peter (Acts,12) when he was being held in prison and was then released through the intervention of an angel, who tells him: “Get up and put on your belt and sandals.” Then the double chains with which he had been fastened, fell off him and Peter was miraculously freed

from prison, thanks to his guardian angel’s intervention. The popes entrust themselves to angels in a similar way. In the Catechism of Christian Doctrine, Pope Pius IX, wrote that angels “are ministers of God and our guardians, as God has entrusted each person to the guardianship of one of them.” We find a text which beautifully expresses this in the Dutch catechism of 1966: “The catechism should preach the fact that there is yet another world, created by God, beyond the world of the senses which we experience, one of pure spirits, known as angels.” The expression ‘pure spirits’ is used many times in the Papal catechism, as a synonym for the word ‘angel’.

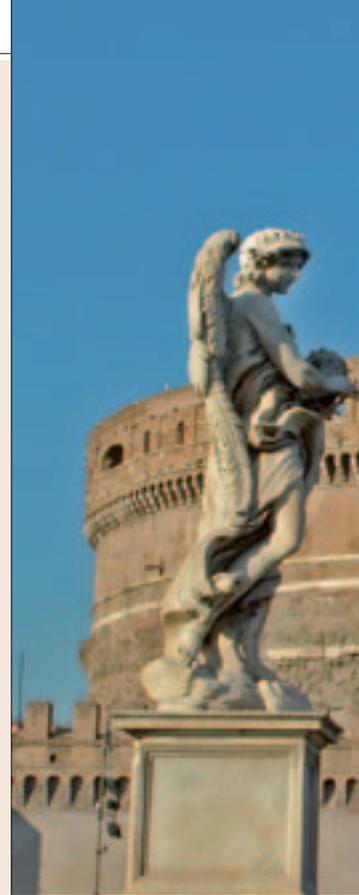
Defender of Rome

The greatest defender and guardian of the Holy See, is St Michael the Archangel, ‘the Prince of the Heavenly Host’, with power over the chosen among the human race, the people of Israel. Using the entire physical and spiritual armour at his disposal, he also aids

in forming the strategy for the spiritual battle being fought both in the heavens and upon earth, which includes the Holy See. The popes frequently asked for the intercession of St Michael the Archangel when battles took place in Rome, particularly when enemy forces were converging on the city.

Miraculous intervention

When, in the year 452, Attila the Hun invaded Italy and threatened Rome, the inhabitants fleeing the city turned to Pope Leo I for help. The Pope set out against Attila, together with an escort of priests, in order to spare Rome. Before setting out, Leo ceremonially consecrated Rome to the protection of St Michael. The Hun commander then spared the city. In gratitude to the Arch-strategist of souls, a church was consecrated to





St Michael the Archangel and all the Holy Angels, on Via Salaria.

At the time of Pope Leo's successor, Pope Gelasius, the Council of Rome officially instituted the cult of St Michael. Thanks to the Emperor Constantine, St Michael was later declared the patron of the Roman Empire. Pope Gelasius acknowledged the miraculous nature of his intervention upon Mount Gargano, and also wrote to Bishop Giusto of Larino, asking him to consecrate one of the basilicas to St Michael. He also spoke of the Archangel to Herculantius, the Bishop of Potenza.

The next pope linked with the intercession of St Michael is Pope Gregory the Great, a son of a Roman senator, and heir to an estate on Mount Celio in Rome. According to a legend, Pope Gregory was in the habit of daily inviting twelve beggars to his estate. On a certain afternoon, thirteen people arrived, instead of the usual twelve. The thirteenth turned out to be an angel. The Pope attached great importance to

the study of the angels – his pontificate had begun with the famous apparition of St Michael above Hadrian's mausoleum. St Michael had appeared there at the top of one of the towers, in flames, dressed in armour and holding a sword. The story tells of this apparition being connected to Rome being spared from a terrible epidemic. It was then that Hadrian's mausoleum was re-named Castel Sant'Angelo (the Castle of the Holy Angel).

Chapel to St Michael

The successor of Pope Gregory the Great, Pope Boniface VIII, erected a chapel to St Michael on this hill. He later placed a white marble statue of St Michael there, represented just as his predecessor had seen him.

Later angelic events connected to the Papacy occurred in the 9th century, at the time that the Saracens invaded Italy, intending to create an Islamic state

in Rome. Pope Leo IV believed that he would save the city thanks to the intercession of St Michael. As a sign of their deliverance and of the expulsion of the Saracens from the city, he asked for a church, dedicated to the Archangel of Battle to be built in the Vatican.

Existence of good angels

The 1st Vatican Council, in 1870, officially confirmed the existence of good angels. Pope Pius IX became a rector of the great Roman Hospice, consecrated to St Michael. He encouraged prayer to St Michael, and the dedication to him of 'the Catholic spirit'. Besieged within the Vatican, he asked for a pendulum in the likeness of St Michael to be placed on his mantelpiece. In doing this, the Pope intended it to be understood, that time is measured in the scales of the Arch-strategist. It was he who set the course of events, by means of the symbolic scales of justice, and the pendulum also supported the dignity of the Papal office.

Pope John Paul II was also keenly interested in St Michael, the Prince of Souls. He spoke on this subject on the occasion of the restoration of the statue at Castel Sant'Angelo, as well as on Monte Sant'Angelo.

The above examples illustrate the angelic history of the Holy See, and give us a deep insight into its essential elements, by means of the written testimonies available on the subject. They also illustrate the great and significant role of St Michael the Archangel, as the Knight of spiritual warfare who defends the Holy See from attack (from pagan and enemy invasion).

Justyna Wnuk, Poland

Consecration of the Vatican to St Michael the Archangel



Vatican City, 5 July 2013. This morning in the Vatican Gardens, in the palace of the Governorate, a new monument to St Michael Archangel by the artist Giuseppe Antonio Lomuscio was inaugurated in the presence of the Holy Father Francis, and Vatican City State was consecrated to Sts. Joseph and Michael Archangel.

Among those present was the Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, specially invited by Pope Francis, and greeted with



■ The figure of St Michael sculpted by Giuseppe Antonio Lomuscio

great affection by the assistants and staff of the Governorate. The two pontiffs remained united throughout the ceremony and sat together in front of the monument. After brief greetings from Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello, president of the Governorate, and an address from Cardinal Giovanni Lajolo, president emeritus of the Governorate, the Holy Father spoke. “In the Vatican Gardens there are many works of art, joined today by this one which however takes a position of particular importance, both for its location and for the meaning it expresses. Indeed, it is not merely a celebratory work, but rather an invitation to reflection and prayer, which fits well into this Year of Faith. Michael, which means ‘Who is like God?’, is the example of God’s primacy, of his transcendence and power. Michael fights to re-establish divine justice; he defends the People of God from enemies and above all from the greatest enemy of all, the Devil. And

St Michael is victorious because God acts in him. This sculpture reminds us that evil is vanquished ... On our path and in the trials of life we are not alone, we are accompanied and sustained by the Angels of God who offer, so to say, their wings to help us to overcome many dangers, to be able to fly high compared to those aspects of life that may burden us or drag us down. We consecrate Vatican City State to St Michael Archangel, asking him to defend us against evil and to banish it... and to St Joseph, Jesus’ guardian, the guardian of the Holy Family, whose presence strengthens us and gives us the courage to make space for God in our lives in order that good may always vanquish evil.” The Pope then recited the prayers for consecration, for St Joseph and St Michael Archangel, sprinkled holy water on the new monument, and finally imparted his blessing upon those present.

Taken from www.radiovaticana.va

Brief introduction to the Nine Choirs of Angels

1. Seraphim

The Seraphim is said to be the highest order of angels who guard God's throne. They are often depicted as 'burning angels' to represent them on fire with love for God. In the Bible Isaiah saw them as six winged beings. These heavenly creatures praise God.

2. Cherubim

The word Cherubim is said to mean 'fullness of knowledge'. The Cherubim have the honour of observing and keeping the records of God's creative powers. Cherubims are said to have four wings and four faces. The Cherubims also act as heavenly counselors and are the seekers of the eternal truth.

3. Thrones

Throne Angels represent the divine majesty and are associated with the power of judgement. They carry out God's justice according to spiritual and universal laws. The Thrones also act as angels who are friends of all the planets. It is the Thrones who will drive forward God's chariot, often they are portrayed as angels who carry the scales of justice.

4. Dominions

The Dominions are angels of leadership and are said to ensure that God's will is carried out by other angels. They help balance the force of creation and of the material and spiritual worlds. The Dominions represent the superiority of wisdom over intellect and govern the natural world and the elements.

5. Virtues

Virtues are known as angels who watch over the heavenly bodies and nature. The Virtues are often associated with miracles performed on earth. Shining bright and often depicted with swords, shields or sceptres, these wonderful angels will assist you in your darkest hour.

6. Powers

Powers are warrior angels who maintain order around planet Earth and protect it from being overthrown by Satan, defending the cosmos and human souls. They fight against evil spirits who attempt to wreak chaos through human beings.

7. Principalities

The Principalities are a realm of angels who keep a watchful eye of the nations

of planet earth and its leaders. They are protectors of religion, giving strength in times of hardship.

8. Archangels

The Archangels are the most frequently mentioned throughout the Bible. They are the leaders of the angelic armies and are Holy messengers of God. There are only three archangels acknowledged by the Catholic Faith: Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. They also command God's armies and act as guardian angels to leaders of world movements. They may be of this or other hierarchies like St Michael the Archangel.

9. Angels

These include guardian angels who are assigned by God to every human being at the moment of conception. Angels are closest to the material world and human beings. They deliver our prayers to God and return with God's answers. Guardian angels have the capacity to access all other angels at any time, their role is to watch over us during our lives. They are also the most caring and social of beings who assist those who ask for help.

Noreen Bavister, UK



Holy Mountain

Have you ever been to a town that you feel it nearly touches heaven? Have you ever been to a church, the only temple in the world, consecrated by an angel himself? Let me take you on an incredible journey. A journey that unchains human hearts...

In panic clutching my husband's fingers I thought "Oh, my God, am I going to die?! Why have you taken me on this coach here?" My beloved husband looked at me and smiled "What's the matter? You look rather pale. You are not afraid, are you?"

St Michael help me

The coach climbed slowly up a narrow meandering road full of tight hair-pin bends. We were at 850 metres above

sea level. We could see the blue sky and the whole world seemed far beneath us. Each time the driver turned, only a thin pane of glass separated us from the deep infinite abyss ready to sweep us away. Paralysed with fear I prayed silently to myself "St Michael, help me. St Michael, please take me safely to your shrine. St Michael, don't you dare leave me here! Oh, I believe in God, the Father almighty... I do, I do, I do!" Chaotic thoughts raced through my mind. My faith increased 150 percent with every single metre we travelled. I have never prayed so fervently as just then on our way to Monte Sant'Angelo, Italy. Later we were told that all the pilgrims prayed all the way up to the Shrine in total silence. I was not alone with my fear.

Smiling, upbeat and totally oblivious of my terror my husband said "We're here darling. You may open your eyes now and could you kindly stop digging your nails into my arm? I hardly feel I have an upper limb in my body." I opened my eyes, looked around, felt the warm sun on my face and immediately shared his enthusiasm.

Stone rectangular houses, whitened by the sun and smoothed by the wind, contrasted starkly with azure sky. The waters of the Adriatic Sea glittered brightly from afar. It felt like the modern hustle and bustle of life had bypassed this holy place for the

atmosphere of tranquility and the peace was almost tangible.

Heavenly Knight

We were at the shrine where the mysterious story of St Michael the Archangel had originated. The story of the Heavenly Knight who opened the gates of hell by his sword and forced the Devil to surrender at his feet.

The Shrine of St Michael of Gargano has been the oldest temple dedicated to the Archangel in the western world. From there the devotion spread throughout the entire European continent. Millions of pilgrims have visited since the Middle Ages. It was amazing to tread the same routes as kings and popes had many years ago.

A sheep and cattle shepherd from the mountains in Gargano had lost a bull. The animal was important for it ensured his herd's procreation. He sought it earnestly and eventually found the bull at the entrance to the cave. Angrily he shot an arrow to punish the rebellious animal but the arrow turned back miraculously (perhaps restrained by the hand of the angel) and hit the shepherd. Local people went to Bishop Lorenzo asking him to explain that strange event to them. The bishop advised prayers and fasting. After three days, St Michael appeared in the Bishop's dream and told him



■ The figure of St Michael from 16th century is kept in a glass box



■ The Museum of Devotion in Monte Sant'Angelo

that henceforth he was the patron and the guard of that place. The Archangel has never left the Sanctuary since then. According to the tradition, he appeared in 492 and 493, and then in 1656 when the plague epidemic spread to Monte Sant'Angelo. After the apparitions of St Michael in the 5th century, his fame and devotion spread quickly in the south of Italy and then in the whole world.

The Shrine

The Sanctuary flourished between the 7th and 9th centuries. Approximately two hundred inscriptions, originating during that period, were carved on walls in the oldest part of the monumental complex. Pilgrims left their names or traces of their hands on the walls. The inscriptions tell us a lot about the pilgrims' origins. They were the Goths, the Lombards, the Franks, the Saxons, the Alemannic (Germans) and the British. The walls became stone palimpsests which recorded numerous pilgrims' inscriptions.

In later centuries the Shrine had been transformed many times. Plundered by the Saracens of Bari led by Emir Sardan in 869, the Shrine was restored by the Lombards of Benevento and then by the Normans in the ninth century. In 1076, Pantaleone - a nobleman of

Amalfi, ordered a cast of the bronze doors in Constantinople. The doors were to make the grotto accessible for pilgrims. Delicate grooves on the door panels tell of the Gospels as well as the history of the apparitions of St Michael the Archangel. The bishop's throne, sculpted by Acceptus, was placed next to the altar. At the same time the icon of St Michael, made of gilded copper, was presented to the Shrine.

In the years 1274 - 1281 the Anjou family built a heavy façade with an octagonal belfry. The entrance to the Shrine was open at the summit of the mountain thanks to a great spiral staircase also financed by the Anjou family.



■ The Chapel of Reconciliation

The Museum of Treasures

Votive offerings to St Michael constitute the museum of devotion in the Shrine. We could admire the popes and kings' chalices, vestments founded by individuals and communities or great families such as the House of Savoy. In the museum there were silver items which used to be altar decorations - lamps hanging in front of the figure of St Michael, chalices, monstrances, crosses and other sacred objects. In the octagon in the middle of the room there was the treasure - the gilded copper icon of St Michael, donated by the Normans. Over the centuries the icon was worshipped by pilgrims in the grotto. There were also important documents in the museum. Among them, there was "Platea" written in the 16th century. It consisted of a contemporary description of the Celestial Basilica. A rich collection of personal items such as necklaces, earrings and rings seemed an obvious proof of the relationship between the faithful and St Michael.

Reconciliation Chapel

On entering the Grotto of St Michael one may feel the presence of the Holy Archangel, whereas in the Chapel of Reconciliation one's heart is instantly filled with a strong wish to confess one's sins to God and start a new life.

We were sitting on simple wooden benches in silence. In front of us there was a huge rock with a great cross and a figure of the crucified Jesus on the top. His head drooped, looked painfully exhausted but His merciful eyes encompassed us all. No words were needed. Although there were numerous pilgrims around, I felt there was only Christ and myself in the chapel.

On the left there were discreet confession rooms where one experienced the Divine Mercy and became God's child again. Seeing my brothers and sisters in faith standing in a queue to reconcile with God made me happy. On the right we saw beautiful frescoes depicting the baptism of Christ in the River Jordan. Angels waiting with towels to mop drops of water from His face. An unforgettable moment. St Michael touched my heart like a genuine gentleman. I now let him take care of me and feel as if both physical and spiritual strength has returned to me.

The feast of the archangels

It was the twenty ninth of September, the day of the feast of the archangels. In the presence of the bishop, the Michaelite fathers and the pilgrims, Father Wladyslaw, a custodian of the Shrine, opened the glass box which the figure of St Michael was kept in. The figure had been made at

the beginning of the 16th century by Captain Consalvo of Cordova. He wanted to thank the Archangel for the protection of Spain against a French army. Father Wladyslaw took the silver sword from St Michael's hand. It was going to be carried in a procession between two rows of priests and monks through the streets of Gargano town.

Crowds of inhabitants and pilgrims gathered there to worship the Heavenly Prince. Little boys dressed up for the Archangel were waving their plastic swords and the crowns on their small heads were swinging violently. But they took no notice of that, the little knights were focused on fighting an invisible enemy. Their parents were trying to calm them down but in vain. The mysterious aura of the procession won their hearts. Local old women wearing black dresses and lacy black veils on their heads seemed leaders in singing the religious songs. Men were either at the back of the procession or at the beginning, assisting uniformed musicians in the orchestra.

We mostly did not understand Italian; nevertheless, we were taking part in the celebration devouring colours, sounds, smells and the whole atmosphere of the feast. In the evening, the figure of St Michael finished its visitation of the square decorated with thousands of lanterns. Now it was the time for wandering from stall to stall in a traditional fair, which history cast back to the Middle Ages. Late at night, exhausted but happy we fell asleep immediately.

Two days on the holy mountain made me closer to God and His messengers. It was like a part of heaven here on earth. I felt sad going home. My memories are like a treasure. I do hope one day St Michael will invite me there again.

Agata Pawlowska
CSMA Office, Poland

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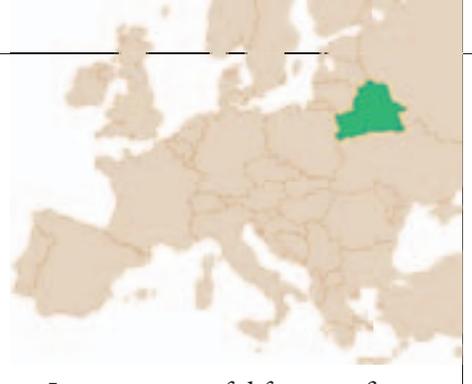
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Special thanks to Father Peter Prusakiewicz CSMA, the chief editor of The Angels magazine, who is the patron of this work.

With my gift of prayer and a humble heart. God bless you.

Father **Christopher Poświata** CSMA
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PO Box 4332, Harlington,
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2014

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/ Divine Mercy

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2 – 5.00pm

2.00 Holy Mass

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Mary Doogan,
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Thursday 20th February 2014

7.30pm Mass

Divine Mercy

and St Michael the Archangel

Church of the Immaculate
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Co. Cork. Eire

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Prusakiewicz CSMA

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Chaplet of St Michael

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

A. *Amen*

Say the following prayer on the medal:

O God, come to my assistance.

O Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

1. 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 on the first large bead, 3 Hail Marys on the next three small beads)

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 Marys)

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 Marys)

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 Marys)

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 Marys)

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 Marys)

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 Marys)

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 Marys)

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 Marys)

Recite on the next four beads:

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.

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.