



The Angels

Messengers from a loving God

Picture taken from: www.fatimatourforpeace.com

The Shrine
at Mount Gargano
– the kingdom
of the confessional

Our Lady of Fatima

St Michael cured my skin

Let's accompany Jesus

Christian symbols



To be like a child before God means to acknowledge one's own nothingness and to await all from God.

A little child in his helplessness loves and trusts without limit, depending totally on its mother and father. God makes us weak since it leads us to reach out to the Lord and attracts God's omnipotence and, above all, His great mercy. To recognise, accept and love your weakness does not mean to accept or justify sin. It helps us to remain honest and true about ourselves, which is essential. For it is only when we become aware of our wretchedness, will we begin to call on God's power and mercy.

First, the helplessness of a child obliges God to manifest His love. The acknowledgement of my own nothingness without faith in God's love leads to sadness, discouragement and even despair. A child finds hope in God's love and unfathomable mercy. God bestows on us countless gifts, but the sin of pride means that we fail to perceive this. That is why there is so little gratitude in people towards God. A child knows that his God is the Father and he confidently abandons himself into the arms of his heavenly Father. The child knows and relies upon his father to do what is best for him.

Secondly, a childlike trust in God means not to accumulate unnecessary

reserves. A child is totally dependent on God, it relies on his providence. This does not mean that we should not acquire the necessary means to live, or justify laziness or the lack of prudence by saying: "God is my Father, He will take care of me." We have to do our best. We have received everything as a gift from God, even when we cooperate with Him to some extent.

Thirdly, to be like a child is not to attribute one's virtues to oneself because it is God who put them in our hands. To those who notice his virtues he says with simplicity: it is not me but God who accomplishes everything. A child knows that all this strength comes from God because Jesus said "For cut off from me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

I assure you of the constant prayer of the priests of the Congregation of St Michael the Archangel for all the readers and their families. Please view our new website www.stmichaelthearchangel.info and let others know about this magazine and help us to distribute them all over the world.

God bless you.

Fr **Peter Prusakiewicz** CSMA
Marki, Nr Warsaw, Poland

The Angels

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Our Lady of Fatima

Saint Pope John Paul II had great devotion to Our Lady of Fatima for it was on 13th May 1981 that he survived an attempt on his life. He attributed this to the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima whose portrait he had turned to look at in St Peter's Square at the moment he was shot. But for this, the bullet would have gone right through his heart and he would have most certainly died. Exactly one year later he made a pilgrimage to Fatima to thank Our Blessed Lady for her protection. He donated the bullet to the basilica at Fatima and it was placed in the crown of the statue of Our Lady.



■ Jacinta, Lúcia and Francesco

It was on 13th May 1917, while Europe was in the grip of the First World War, that Our Lady appeared to three Portuguese shepherd children; Lúcia, Francesco and Jacinta. They claimed to have seen a woman dressed in white standing on a cloud in an evergreen tree. She told the children to come to the same place on the thirteenth of every month until October when she would explain to them who she was. In the meantime they were to say the Rosary every day. Each time they returned she prophesied a number of world events and asked in particular that Russia should be consecrated to her Immaculate Heart. As a great sign of the whole message truly coming from God, a marvellous miracle was worked in the sky above Fatima before 70,000 witnesses on 13th October 1917 at the time, date and place that Lúcia and the other two children had prophesied in the name of Our Lady of Fatima. The miracle occurred with the sun at which everyone could stare

perfectly without blinking or hurting their eyes. While they were watching the sun, it rotated, got large and small, came close to the people and went far away from them. Literally the sun “danced” and everyone there testified to seeing it, even non-believers, dropping onto their knees and begging for forgiveness.

Our Lady of Fatima promised that the whole world would be at peace, and that many souls would go to heaven if her requests were listened to and obeyed. She told us that war is a punishment for sin; that God would punish the world for its sins in our time by means of war, hunger, persecution of the Church and persecution of the Holy Father, the Pope, unless we listened to and obeyed the command of God.

When Pope John Paul II visited Fatima he said that the message of Fatima is more relevant and more urgent now than when Our Lady first appeared. The message is an anguished appeal from our Heavenly Mother,

who sees us in great danger and who comes to offer her help and advice. The local bishop acknowledged the apparitions as genuine and permitted devotion to Our Lady of Fatima.

Pope John Paul II beatified the two visionaries Jacinta and her brother Francesco. Lúcia, who became a nun, died aged 98 in 2005, her body being laid to rest in the basilica at Fatima the following year.

Our world is still wounded by war, while men and women of goodwill continue to search for peace. We need to pray for the helpless victims of war and for world leaders to realise that peace does not come through war. What better prayer can we offer than the Rosary?

Today we ask Our Lady of Fatima to continue protecting our Pope, our Church and our world.

Fr Francis Maple

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Photo: Piotr Dobis

I prayed before the statue, while the Archangel cured my skin

The story of my skin disease began before I was two years old and lasted for thirty years. My parents took me to see various specialists in search of treatment. I was diagnosed with atopic skin inflammation, a chronic, long-term condition, punctuated by periods of remission, followed by the re-occurrence of my symptoms – dry skin, irritation and open wounds.

From early childhood I had to cope with deep wounds on various parts of my body and also had to deny myself many things to which I proved allergic, as tests showed me to have multiple allergies, mainly to milk, eggs, citrus fruit and cocoa.

The illness had progressed further by the time I went to primary school – the skin on my fingers would split and wounds would form in the crook (flexure) of my elbows and behind my knees and so my parents continued to hunt for a cure. I remember that while I was in primary school, I was too ashamed to shake anybody's hand and found questions about my illness extremely embarrassing. The

worst thing was that ordinary everyday activities, such as doing my lessons, would cause me pain, which made me feel inferior to other children. In year three of primary school I had to spend seven weeks in the children's sanatorium. At that age, the experience of being alone away from my family and everyone I knew was terrible. When I got back, the illness improved slightly, but intensified again two years later. In year seven I had to go to the sanatorium for a further seven weeks.

In the holidays I went to the religious summer camp in Rychwald, when my illness became particularly intense. Fortunately, I then met the well-known Polish herbalist, Fr

Grzegorz Sroka, who treated me with his herbal remedies, which much alleviated the symptoms, but did not cure the illness completely.

My husband was my hands

The doctors expressed the hope that the condition would be alleviated with the onset of puberty. However, this turned out not to be the case and apart from controlling my diet, I had also to be very careful about such simple things as a damp sponge with chalk (I am a teacher by profession).

I remember having to wear plastic freezer bags and cotton gloves on my hands at night in order that the creams would be well absorbed into my skin and to prevent me scratching my extremely itchy wounds in my sleep. The older I got the more self-conscious I became about my condition.

My condition was under permanent review by the dermatologists. Treatment consisted of applying steroid (hydrocortisone) creams, which were strong anti-inflammatories, but which have negative effects on the system, particularly if you are still young.

When I got married in 2009, the condition had calmed down to the extent that I no longer had broken skin at the elbows and behind my knees or on my neck, but only on my fingertips. Our first daughter was born in 2011, followed by a son in 2012. When I became pregnant for the third time, in March 2013, my skin condition became acute as never before. I now had wounds on the inner and outer aspects of my hands. The pregnancy was difficult, as I was unable to take any medication whatsoever and the home remedies which I had used in the past now proved totally ineffective.

When our daughter was born in November of 2013, the problem worsened in that I now also had broken skin on the soles of my feet. Walking became painful. My husband and I continued to seek medical advice but each of the doctors we consulted – and we consulted six doctors in all – simply proposed that I stop breast feeding and re-commence steroid treatment, which would only serve to alleviate my symptoms. By early March 2014, my difficulties were so acute that I could hardly function normally at all. I had such deep wounds on the palms of my hands that I was unable to hold cutlery or

even a cup. My fingers were permanently bent, so I was unable to carry out such everyday tasks as preparing a meal or changing nappies and I was in pain when bathing or washing my hands. Daniel, my husband, was indispensable in carrying out all everyday chores and helped me a lot. I had already given up breast feeding in order to start taking steroids, but even these had little effect and only served to slightly alleviate my symptoms. My condition was also taking its toll on us financially.

Treatment and healing

We continued to seek out help and decided on a change of climate, and so the whole family (all five of us) went to Kolobrzeg, the city by the Baltic Sea, where I visited a number of dermatologists, but to no avail. The trip had eaten up all our savings.

On our return from the seaside, we went to the health centre where they did more allergy tests. The results came as a surprise to the doctor, as I proved not only to be allergic to egg whites and to citrus fruits but also suffered from other allergens which caused changes in my skin. The doctor prescribed a new course of medication, a very strict diet and I had to wear gloves when going outdoors. My next consultation was arranged for 15th April. When I stuck rigorously to the diet, my hands and feet began to heal, but if I deviated from it in the slightest, my skin would begin once again to itch, sting and split terribly. I attended my third consultation on 22nd April and again on 12th May. The doctor told me to keep to the diet and treatment plan and set a date for my

next appointment for 20th May. I did not need to keep that appointment.

On 13th May, the statue of St Michael the Archangel was due to visit my parish church. I had earlier noted the announcement of a Mass and prayer for healing as part of the programme for the visit. I felt that I must attend and came to the Mass, together with my mother and three children, full of faith and hope. The Lord arranged it so that my children were unusually well-behaved, so that I could concentrate on my prayer. I still recall how I was totally steeped in prayer. I remember nothing except for the closeness of God, and when we could later approach the miraculous statue of St Michael the Archangel, I too went up and, when I touched the statue with my very sick hands, God granted me healing through his intercession. It is quite unbelievable! On the Thursday, the wounds began to close and by the Friday, I was completely healed. Ever since that memorable day, I have entirely stopped taking medication or maintaining my strict diet, as I very clearly feel that I have regained my health by the workings of Divine Grace rather than as a result of following medical advice. Nearly a year and a half has passed since that day and I live quite normally, eat a normal diet and do not take any medication – and, we have since been blessed with a fourth child!

I love you, Jesus, for what You have done for me, and I thank you, O powerful St Michael the Archangel, for your intercession on my behalf. I praise you with all my heart. I am healthy and grateful.

Katarzyna from Glogowek, Poland

We encourage readers to follow the medical advice given as well as pray for healing.

The kingdom of the confessional



Photo: Karol Wojcieczek

■ Fr Wladyslaw Suchy CSMA

The story of the shrine at Mount Gargano extends over the last 1,500 years of Christianity. It is now hard to believe that the congregation bearing the name of the Archangel has only served in this place for the last 20 years of that history. After the example of the custodian of this church, consecrated other than by human hand, we should also believe that this turn of events is part of the unfathomable plan of God.

How did all this start?

We began our work in Italy to a greater extent in 1982 in Castel Sant'Elia, from which we often organised pilgrimages to Mount Gargano. It was during those pilgrimages that the desire to minister in this place slowly grew in my heart.

In 1995, the Benedictine abbot took the decision to withdraw his monks from the shrine of St Michael. There were only two of them, one of whom was 90 years of age, the other almost 70. The local bishop initially looked for priests to serve at Monte Sant'Angelo in other Benedictine

monasteries and he did manage to find two other Benedictines to come here. However, news of the search for spiritual guardians for the shrine of the archangel reached our congregation. I therefore drafted a letter on our behalf informing the bishop of our readiness to serve at the shrine, pointing out that the Archangel was our main patron.

For a year after the arrival of other Benedictines at the shrine, nothing further was heard about the matter. Then, one afternoon, I received a telephone call from the bishop. It turned out that the Benedictine abbot was finally withdrawing his monks from Gargano and he was looking for other priests ready to take over the spiritual care of the shrine. I then presented this proposition to our then Vicar General, Fr Kazimierz Tomaszewski CSMA. In December 1994, I, together with the Vicar General and Fr Edward Data CSMA, went to speak to the bishop and made an initial agreement for priests of the Order of St Michael the Archangel to serve in Monte Sant'Angelo. There were other plans, for instance, for a community of retired diocesan priests to serve at the shrine, but the bishop finally agreed that he would prefer a congregation which would undertake to care for the shrine on a permanent basis in a more systematic and organised way.

So this was what Divine Providence ordained...

Just so. None of us had previously foreseen such an eventuality. Dating from the fifth century, the shrine at Gargano is one of the oldest in Italy. Only the basilicas in Rome originate from that era. It is also one of the most significant shrines in southern Italy. This was why some Italians were not exactly overjoyed at the prospect of the shrine being in the hands of a Polish congregation. With St Michael as our leader, however, we survived all opposition. Thanks to our service and improvements in how the shrine was being run, we eventually managed to get the people of the town on our side. It gave us great joy to serve the pilgrims and to work for the glory of God!

We were later able to extend the pilgrims house and museum and we have recently renovated the upper level of the church.

What work remains to be done?

We would very much like to be able to bring the devotion to St

Michael to the parishes. Many have invited us, but we are unable to undertake such visits in a more systematic manner, as there are simply too few of us. We are concentrating our efforts on ensuring that we have sufficient priests available to hear confessions at the shrine.

We would very much like to be able to make at least two priests available solely to speak to pilgrims, and not just in the confessional. People frequently come to us who have been wounded by life, who need someone to listen, people for whom psychotherapy has not provided all the answers. There are times when, after being touched by God, they feel able to unload all their burdens and we sometimes need to devote even a whole day to such a person. We advise pilgrimage organisers to allow sufficient time for pilgrims to have at least half a day available for confession and personal quiet prayer.

How did you yourself react on hearing that you were to be the custodian of the shrine?

It is certainly a great privilege for our congregation to be chosen to serve at the shrine, one which, above all, we treat in a spirit of service. I feel a burden of responsibility to prepare this 'pearl' of our congregation to be fit to fulfil its mission.

Being in the shrine is certainly a wonderful spiritual experience – you feel the extent of the graces which are granted there and which I hear about at every turn.

What have you personally gained from your 20 years' service in this place?

I have learnt that we should do all that is in our power to do, but that it is God, through the action of the Holy Spirit, who acts in people's hearts.

How is this action observable?

Sometimes, people with a lot of doubts come to us, people who don't actually themselves know how it is that they have come here. The experience whereby their hearts have been touched and which often ends



■ Holy Mass in the Grotto of St Michael the Archangel, Gargano, Italy

▶ in their receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation is unplanned and unexpected. This same experience however, has been repeated over centuries. From the earliest centuries of the shrine's existence, it has attracted penitents wishing to experience reconciliation with God.

Can you give us any particularly spectacular examples?

The grace of conversion is granted in the confessional and, as such, remains a secret unless the person wishes to write down their testimony. The powerful intercession of St Michael is also active however, in bringing about physical healings. I recently received the testimony of a young boy from Calabria, suffering from cancer, who felt the touch of Divine Mercy during a pilgrimage to our shrine, and, as later tests proved, all signs of illness had miraculously disappeared.

This region of Italy seems to abound in graces. You are very close to the shrine of St Padre Pio at

San Giovanni Rotondo. Padre Pio himself had a great devotion to St Michael.

We can clearly observe God's intentions in all this... Padre Pio was very aware of the extent of the outpouring of mercy at the shrine of St Michael the Archangel at Mount Gargano, which is why he recommended that his spiritual sons and daughters visit this place. He drew attention to the role of the Archangel in overcoming all forms of bondage and harmful attachments. Padre Pio himself came here as a pilgrim. Their successors today continue to pray at the shrine of Monte Sant' Angelo before visiting San Giovanni Rotondo, according to Padre Pio's instructions.

What requests do pilgrims make most frequently of St Michael?

For the graces of conversion and deliverance from spiritual bondage and addiction. Parents most frequently ask for conversion for their children. Many people ask for the healing of marital relationships.

There are certainly many more requests for spiritual than for physical healing nowadays, although in a period of pestilence after the fifth apparition, St Michael protected people from lethal disease. To this day, stones from Gargano are seen as symbols of entrustment to God.

And these have now regained their popularity in Poland and other places visited by the pilgrim statue of St Michael.

St Michael leads us to God by means of this symbol. Mi-ka-el, after all, means 'Who is like God?' Who, other than God is capable of healing or delivering us from disease? Putting our trust in Him, even if we do not obtain victory over physical illness, we will certainly obtain the greatest victory, which is our salvation.

How then should we encourage those of our readers who may feel they have insufficient time or determination to visit Gargano, to go there?

The rock of which our shrine is built is saturated with the prayers of many millions of pilgrims, from hardened sinners to saints. This is a singular place of prayer, with an extraordinary charism. You feel the spiritual presence of St Michael the Archangel. We also have all the necessary infrastructure so, whether you come on your own or as part of a group, there is nothing to prevent you from spending two to three days in quiet reflection, penitence and personal prayer.

Fr Peter Prusakiewicz CSMA and Karol Wojteczek were speaking to Fr Władysław Suchy CSMA, custodian of the Shrine of St Michael the Archangel, Monte Sant'Angelo, Italy



■ The Chapel of Reconciliation, Shrine of St Michael the Archangel, Gargano, Italy

In the footsteps of St Faustina

A private vow

On Saint Faustina's journey through life there are many important places in villages, towns and cities where the Apostle of the Divine Mercy stayed.

She was sent to Ostrowek just after she left Lodz and came to Warsaw in July 1924. God told her to enter a particular church and ask a particular priest for advice. In that way she came down to the Lipszyc's house. For the next year she worked as a domestic and saved money for a modest trousseau. In the meantime she searched for a convent in Warsaw.

Mrs Aldona Lipszyc recalled that Helenka, who worked there for one year, carried out her duties excellently and that she was treated as a family member. Therefore, it was so hard to part with her when she stopped working there. At this home she was always associated with the hymn 'I am to revere Jesus hidden in the Sacrament' – she had frequently sung it.

Helenka attended Holy Mass and services in the parish church in

Klembow where, in June 1925, she made a private vow of chastity. In the 'Diary' she described the event in the following way: "It was during the octave of Corpus Christi, God filled my soul with the interior light of a deeper knowledge of Him as Supreme Goodness and Supreme Beauty. I came to know how very much God loves me. Eternal is His love for me. It was at vespers. In simple words, which flowed from the heart, I made to God a vow of perpetual chastity. From that moment I felt a greater intimacy with God, my Spouse. From that moment I set up a little cell in my heart where I always kept company with Jesus" (Diary16).

Sr M. Elizabeth Siepak O.L.M

Taken from the book

"In the footsteps of St Faustina"



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■ The Lipszyc's house in Ostrowek, now the House of St Faustina Kowalska, Discernment Center for Vocation, Poland

Proclaiming Divine Mercy

The prayer of the Church in our times



The Church Appeals to the Mercy of God

The Church proclaims the truth of God's mercy revealed in the crucified and risen Christ, and she professes it in various ways. Furthermore, she seeks to practice mercy towards people through people, and she sees in this an indispensable condition for solicitude for a better and "more human" world, today and tomorrow. However, at no time and in no historical period - especially at a moment as critical as our own - can the Church forget the prayer that is a cry for the mercy of God amid the many forms of evil which weigh upon humanity and threaten it. This is the fundamental right and duty of the Church in Christ Jesus, her right and duty towards God and towards humanity. The more the human conscience succumbs to secularisation, loses its sense of the very meaning of the word "mercy," moves away from God and distances itself from the mystery of mercy, the more the Church has

the right and the duty to appeal to the God of mercy "with loud cries". These "loud cries" should be the mark of the Church of our times, cries uttered to God to implore His mercy, the certain manifestation of which she professes and proclaims as having already come in Jesus crucified and risen, that is, in the Paschal Mystery. It is this mystery which bears within itself the most complete revelation of mercy, that is, of that love which is more powerful than death, more powerful than sin and every evil, the love which lifts man up when he falls into the abyss and frees him from the greatest threats.

Modern man feels these threats. What has been said above in this regard is only a rough outline. Modern man often anxiously wonders about the solution to the terrible tensions which have built up in the world and which entangle humanity. And if at times he lacks the courage to utter the word "mercy," or if in his conscience empty of religious content he does not find the equivalent, so much greater is the need for the Church to utter his word, not only in her own name but also in the name of all the men and women of our time.

Everything that I have said in the present document on mercy should therefore be continually transformed into an ardent prayer: into a cry that implores mercy according to the needs of man in the modern world. May this cry be full of that truth about mercy which has found such rich expression in Sacred Scripture and in Tradition, as also in the authentic life of faith of countless generations of the People of God. With this cry let us, like the sacred writers, call upon the God who cannot despise anything that He has made, the God who is faithful to Himself, to His fatherhood and His love. And, like the prophets, let us appeal to that love which has maternal characteristics and which, like a mother, follows each of her children, each lost sheep, even if they should number millions, even if in the world evil should prevail over goodness, even if contemporary humanity should deserve a new "flood" on account of its sins, as once the generation of Noah did. Let us have recourse to that fatherly love revealed to us by Christ in His messianic mission, a love which reached its culmination in His cross, in His death and resurrection. Let us have recourse to God through Christ, mindful of the

words of Mary's Magnificat, which proclaim mercy "from generation to generation". Let us implore God's mercy for the present generation. May the Church which, following the example of Mary, also seeks to be the spiritual mother of mankind, express in this prayer her maternal solicitude and at the same time her confident love, that love from which is born the most burning need for prayer.

Let us offer up our petitions, directed by the faith, by the hope, and by the charity which Christ has planted in our hearts. This attitude is likewise love of God, whom modern man has sometimes separated far from himself, made extraneous to himself, proclaiming in various ways that God is "superfluous." This is, therefore, love of God, the insulting rejection of whom by modern man we feel profoundly, and we are ready to cry out with Christ on the cross: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." At the same time it is love of people, of all men and women without any exception or division: without difference of race, culture, language, or world outlook, without distinction between friends and enemies. This is love for people - it desires every true good for each individual and for every human community, every family, every nation, every social group, for young people, adults, parents, the elderly a love for everyone, without exception. This is love, or rather an anxious solicitude to ensure for each individual every true good and to remove and drive away every sort of evil.

And, if any of our contemporaries do not share the faith and hope which lead me, as a servant of Christ and steward of the mysteries

of God, to implore God's mercy for humanity in this hour of history, let them at least try to understand the reason for my concern. It is dictated by love for man, for all that is human and which, according to the intuitions of many of our contemporaries, is threatened by an immense danger. The mystery of Christ, which reveals to us the great vocation of man and which led me to emphasize in the encyclical 'Redemptor hominis' his incomparable dignity, also obliges me to proclaim mercy



■ The Good Samaritan by Johann Carl Loth, c. 1676

as God's merciful love, revealed in that same mystery of Christ. It likewise obliges me to have recourse to that mercy and to beg for it at this difficult, critical phase of the history of the Church and of the world, as we approach the end of the second millennium.

In the name of Jesus Christ crucified and risen, in the spirit of His messianic mission, enduring in the history of humanity, we raise our voices and pray that the Love which is in the Father may once again be revealed at this stage of history, and that, through the work of the Son and Holy Spirit, it may be shown to be present in our modern world

and to be more powerful than evil: more powerful than sin and death. We pray for this through the intercession of her who does not cease to proclaim "mercy...from generation to generation", and also through the intercession of those for whom there have been completely fulfilled the words of the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

In continuing the great task of implementing the Second Vatican Council, in which we can rightly see a new phase of the self-realisation of the Church and in keeping with the epoch in which it has been our destiny to live, the Church herself must be constantly guided by the full consciousness that in this work it is not permissible for her, for any reason, to withdraw into herself. The reason for her existence is, in fact, to reveal God, that Father who allows us to "see" Him in Christ. No matter how strong the resistance of human history may be, no matter how marked the diversity of contemporary civilization, no matter how great the denial of God in the human world, so much the greater must be the Church's closeness to that mystery which, hidden for centuries in God, was then truly shared with man, in time, through Jesus Christ.

With my apostolic blessing.

Given in Rome, at St Peter's, on the thirtieth day of November, the First Sunday of Advent, in the year 1980, the third of the pontificate.

John Paul II

Taken from www.vatican.va
Encyclical Dives In Misericordia
Pope John Paul II
13th November 1980

Let's accompany Jesus

Scripture foretold that the Messiah would come as suffering Servant who would be despised and rejected and who would die for His people. Let us follow the Way of the Cross, considering how Jesus fulfilled the prophecies and offered Himself for us as the Sacrificial Lamb.

1. Jesus is condemned to death

"By force and by law He was taken; would anyone plead His cause?" (Isaiah 53:8).

We think of Jesus being seized by the high priest's guards and then being interrogated by Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate. False witnesses were brought against Him. No one defended Him, nor did He defend Himself.

The powerful of this world have money and 'friends' to support them while the weak are alone and helpless. If we take pity on the weak, it is Jesus we are defending.

2. Jesus receives the cross

"Ours were the suffering He bore, ours are the sorrows He carried" (Isaiah 53:4).

We think of Jesus taking on the heavy burden of our sin. Though He was innocent, He was willing to accept this punishment on our behalf.

Jesus took responsibility for our salvation. We have but one life to save, may we take responsibility for that life.

3. Jesus falls the first time

"Harshly dealt with, He bore it humbly, He never opened His mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

We think of Jesus, falling under the weight of the cross, goaded by the sin but never once complaining.

When others place burdens on us we complain and sometimes rebel. We fail to use that burden as a means of spiritual growth.

4. Jesus meets His Mother

"The Lord called me before I was born, from my mother's womb He pronounced my name. Does a woman forget her baby, or fail to cherish the son of her womb?" (Isaiah 49:1,15).

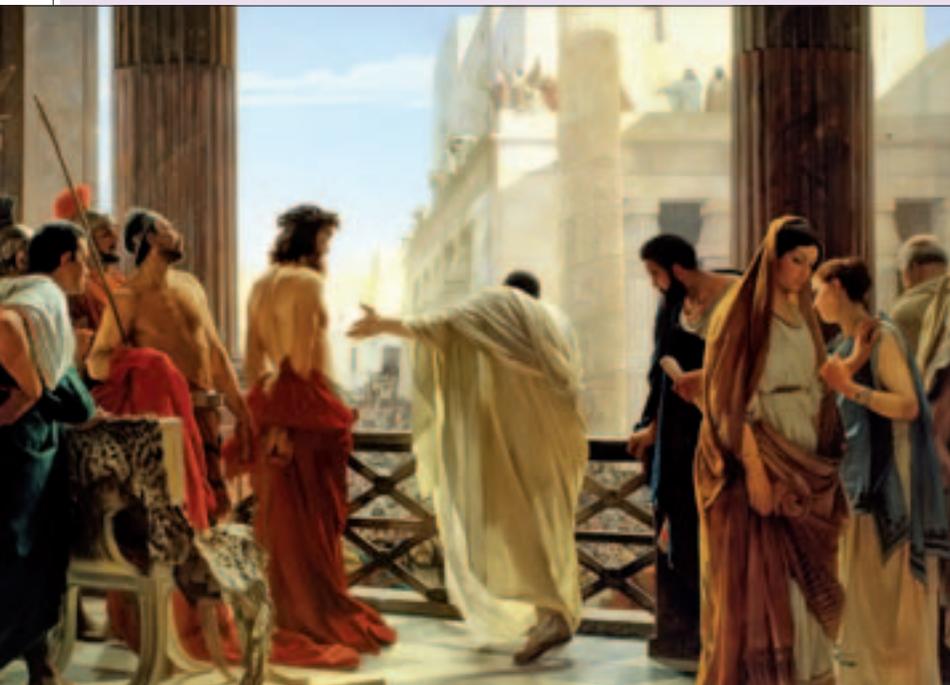
How could Mary ever forget that visit from the angel, announcing that She is to be the Mother of the Messiah? How could She forget the birth of Her Beloved in Bethlehem? She must have shared so many memories with Jesus when She met Him on His last sorrowful journey.

Do we remember the debt we owe our own mothers? Do we pray for them and long to be with them in heaven like Jesus longed for His Mother to be with Him?

5. The cross is laid upon Simon of Cyrene

"Trouble is near, I have no one to help me" (Psalm 22:1 1).

We think of Jesus struggling to carry the heavy cross all alone. But



■ Ecce Homo by Antonio Ciseri, 1871

He wasn't left completely alone, for Simon came forward to help Him and to lighten the burden.

There are so many lonely people in this world who have no one to help them carry their burdens. Do we recognize them and give them an arm to lean on and a shoulder to cry on?

6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

"Without beauty, without majesty, no looks to attract our eyes" (Isaiah 53:2).

All the agony of Jesus – pain, exhaustion, the heat of the day – must have reflected in His face. No doubt He was frowning with pain, and His face would be smudged with blood and dirt. Yet Veronica saw a suffering human being, took pity on Him and bathed His face clean.

Often it is hard to see beyond appearances to the real person. In doing so we fail to help them and so we fail to see Jesus in them.

7. Jesus falls the second time

"The Lord has been pleased to crush Him with suffering" (Isaiah 53:10).

We think of Jesus falling under that intolerable burden. Only His determination to do His Father's Will and achieve His purpose kept Him going.

How often we fail to see that suffering has a good purpose. Jesus is our example because He brought so much good out of His suffering.

8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

"Shout for joy, you barren women who bore no children!" (Isaiah 54:1).



■ St Veronica with the Holy Kerchief by Mattia Preti, between 1655-1660

We think of Jesus telling the weeping women not to concern themselves with Him but to cry on their own troubles, which He clearly foresaw. Jerusalem was to be ruined, and many mothers would have cause to weep for their families.

Jesus is teaching us here that the way to cope with a burden is to help other people with theirs. If only we would try to follow His example!

9. Jesus falls the third time

"Despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering" (Isaiah 53:3).

We think of Jesus on His knees in the dust once again. The crowd looked at Him with contempt, seeing only a

worthless criminal going to His death. How alone He must have felt.

Coping with rejection is painful. We all look for recognition and help. When we are crushed and alone may we picture Jesus in the same situation and remember that He will never reject us.

10. Jesus is stripped of His garments

"They divide my garments among them, they cast lots for my clothes" (Psalm 22:18).

We think of Jesus experiencing the indignity of having His clothes stripped from Him. Then those Roman soldiers threw dice for His cloak.

At times we can be cruel and unfeeling, profiting from other people's misfortunes. Instead of sympathizing with them do we try to turn the situation to our advantage?

11. Jesus is nailed to the cross

"He was pierced through our faults" (Isaiah 53:5).

We think of Jesus enduring the terrible pain of being nailed to the cross. All the time He was thinking of us.

May we think of Jesus enduring such pain whenever we sin. Every sin is a hammer blow causing Him intense pain.

12. Jesus dies on the cross

"My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1).



■ Christ at the cross by Carl Heinrich Bloch, 1870



■ Pieta by William-Adolphe Bouguereau, 1876

We think of how desolate Jesus must have felt as He hung on the cross. He even felt deserted by His Father in heaven and He cried out to Him in anguish. Surely separation from God is the greatest possible pain! May we remember that in our darkest hour God never deserts us.

13. Jesus is taken down from the cross

"His soul's anguish over, He shall see the light and be content" (Isaiah 53:11).

We think of Jesus' Mother and His friends coming to take down

His body from the cross. They were sorrowful, but thankful for His sufferings were over and that He accomplished His task.

For Mary the death of Jesus was not the end. It was the beginning of hope in the life to come. When life is hard may we look for brighter days if not in this world, most certainly in the next.

14. Jesus is buried

“They gave him a tomb with the rich”
(Isaiah 53:9).

We think of that generous friend of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea, who gave his own tomb as a burial place for his Master. The Messiah who was born in a poor stable was buried in a rich man’s tomb.

There will always be people worse off than ourselves. May we never fail to offer them help from our storage of good things.

We thank Jesus for fulfilling the prophecies written about Him. Knowing what He had to do made it all harder for Him. Still He never flinched. May we appreciate the great Sacrifice He made for us. We remember the words of Isaiah: “On Him lies punishment that brings us peace, and through His wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

Fr **Francis Maple**

The Franciscan Friary, Pantasaph,
Holywell, Flintshire, Wales

www.fatherfrancismaple.co.uk



■ Burial of Christ by Carl Heinrich Bloch, 1873

A reason to hope

Jesus revealed this truth to St Faustina. Jesus converses with a despairing soul in a way that gives us reason to hope as He offers the soul this final grace and comes to it three times:

Jesus: O Soul steeped in darkness, do not despair. All is not yet lost. Come and confide in your God who is love and mercy.

In the soul arises this reply: “For me there is no mercy,” and it falls into greater darkness, a despair which is a foretaste of hell and makes it unable to draw near to God.

Jesus calls to the soul a third time, but the soul remains deaf and blind, hardened and despairing. Then the mercy of God begins to exert itself, and without any cooperation from the soul, God grants it final grace. If this too is spurned, God will leave the soul in this self-chosen disposition for eternity. This grace emerges from the merciful Heart of Jesus and gives the soul a special light by means of which the soul begins to understand God’s effort; but conversion depends on its own will. The soul knows that this, for her, is final grace and, should it show even a flicker of good will, the mercy of God will accomplish the rest (**Diary 1486**).

Angels urging us to return to the Lord

“Then he came to his senses and said, ‘How many of my father’s paid servants have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants’” (Luke 15:17-20).

There is a certain kind of sadness which is a grace, and which we experience when we are far from God.

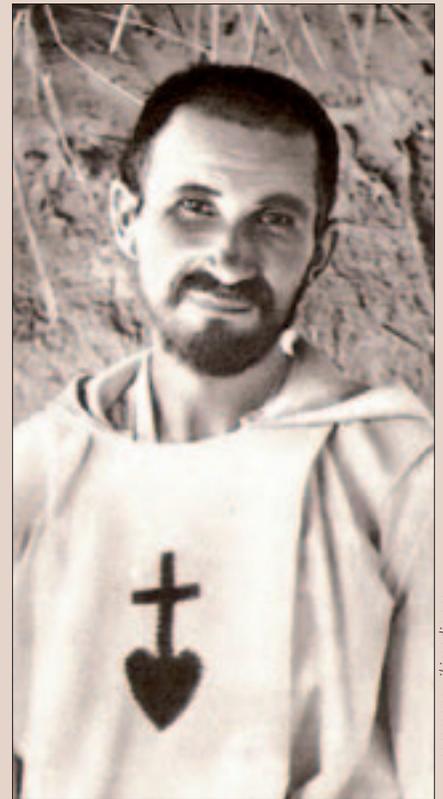
It is 1st December 1916. Charles de Foucauld has been living for many years in the small part of the Sahara belonging to Algeria. His life is one of prayer and extreme poverty and of love and goodwill to all he meets. He lives among the Tuareg people, who are Muslims. Between 1910 and 1911, he builds the hermitage of Asekrem, which lies at an altitude of 2,700 metres above sea level in the mountains of Hoggar. He has been engaged in physical labour and in linguistics, resulting in 1915 in a French-Tuareg dictionary and the translation of the Gospels into the Tuareg tongue. However, those were unsettled times when in 1915, disturbances had broken out to the south of Tripoli, resulting in an attack by the Senussi Bedouin on the region inhabited by the Tuareg. From that moment onwards, Charles de Foucauld was regarded by them only as a Frenchman, rather than somebody who loved them as a brother. On 1st December 1916,

in Tamanrasset, he was shot dead by the Senussi, while praying before the Blessed Sacrament.

Orphaned at a young age and losing his faith

Charles de Foucauld was born in Strasbourg, France, on 15th September 1858, into an aristocratic Catholic family. At aged six, he became an orphan and was brought up by his Morlet grandparents. After leaving school, he chose a military career. It was at this time when Charles lost his faith and embarked on a carefree and hedonistic lifestyle. During the Bou Amama uprising of 1881, Charles took part in the campaign in the south of Oran.

By January 1882, Charles had left the army and travelled across Morocco between 1883 and 1884. During his researches, he had been moved by the sight of Muslims in prayer. He observed them as they bowed down in prayer five times each day and heard them frequently referring to *Allah*



■ Charles de Foucauld around 1907

when speaking. He began to reproach himself: “I, on the contrary, live without regard for God’s commandments and for religion!” This was a seed of unease which took root in his heart. It was during this time that Charles was writing his book, *Discovering Morocco*, which earned him a Gold Medal from the French Geographical Society.



“God, if you exist, make yourself known to me!”

Charles spent 1886 in Paris. He lived near his aunt and his cousin, Marie de Bondy. In the middle of that year, Charles began going to church. Recalling this time, in 1890 he wrote: “I then began going to church, but only because it was the only place where I felt any sense of peace. At this time, I was still not a believer. I spent long hours in church, repeating an odd prayer which I felt in my heart: ‘God, if you exist, make yourself known to me.’ While at home, God led me to feel a sense of painful emptiness and great sadness, of a kind which I had never before experienced. This sadness accompanied me wherever I went. I organised many parties and amusements and meetings with

friends, but this made absolutely no difference to the feeling.”

On 29th October 1886, Charles admitted to his cousin, Marie de Bondy: “You’re lucky to have your faith, while I seek for light but never find it!” Although he did not yet know it, his cousin Marie was his “merciful spiritual mother”. She had been praying for many years for the conversion of the “poor, misguided orphan”, as she referred to him in her prayers. Charles was moved by her peace of heart, her goodness and goodwill. She did not preach him sermons. She did not try to convert him. What she did was to show him how much he meant to her and how much she valued him. This was for him the most eloquent argument she could have used.

The next fateful meeting arranged for him by the Divine Providence, was with another person of similar qualities. This was with Fr Huvelin, parish priest of the church of St Augustine in Paris. He was known as a confessor.

Among those who came to him was the renowned chemist and discoverer of vaccines against rabies and cholera, Louis Pasteur. Fr Huvelin was known to say: “If you wish to convert someone, it is best not to attempt to convince them by argument and preaching, but by making them feel and understand that you love them.”

The unexpected grace of conversion

On the following day, 30th October, something quite unexpected was to happen. This was the unexpected meeting which Charles de Foucauld had longed for in the depths of his soul. He entered the church of St Augustine and went straight to the confessional, where Fr Huvelin was hearing confessions. He did not kneel in the confessional, but stood directly before the priest and said: “Reverend Father Abbot, I am an atheist. I have come to learn more about the Catholic faith.” Fr Huvelin looking him straight in the eye and recognising his fervent desire for God, said to Charles: “Kneel down and confess your sins and you will believe!” Charles protested, saying: “But that was not what I came for!” Quietly but decidedly, the priest re-iterated: “Kneel down and confess your sins and you will believe!” Charles obeyed, knelt down and sincerely opened his heart and tortured soul to the priest. He received absolution and forgiveness, which, like the skilled hand of an artist, began to form in him a new heart and soul. Charles had eventually found himself in the embrace of the Merciful Father, the God who had constantly been seeking him. After the confession, Father Huvelin asked him: ▶

▶ “Have you eaten today?” On hearing that he had not, the priest then said to him: “Come, I will now give you Holy Communion.” And so, Charles de Foucauld, who had entered the church full of anxiety, found himself on his knees, his eyes filled with tears, receiving his true ‘First Holy Communion.’

“I cannot live, other than for Him”

Recalling this memorable day, this exceptional gift of heaven,

Charles wrote in a letter, dated 14th August 1901: “As soon as I believed that God exists, I understood that I could not live, other than for him. My vocation was born at the very same time as my faith. How great and wonderful God is! There is a massive divide between God and all that is not Him.”

These words can only imperfectly present the wonderful adventure which began during that confession. Charles de Foucauld then falls in love with God at that moment and feels a desire to give love in return for God’s love for him. From that

moment onwards, he does not want to waste the slightest moment to show his love for God. He does not wish to deny God any of the love which is His due. He feels a great and burning desire to make reparation to God for all the mistakes of his life. He is consumed with such a burning love that it only remains to throw himself into the arms of God’s Eternal Love and to remain there forever. There will be no more room in his life for equivocation or apathy in God’s service. The following words of St Augustine express this perfectly:

*Late have I loved you,
Beauty so old and so new,
Late have I loved you.*

*And see, you were within,
And I was in the external world
and sought you there,
And I my unlovely state
plunged into these lovely
things which you made.*

*You were with me,
and I was not with you.
The lovely things kept
me far from you,
Though if they did not have
their existence in you
They had no existence at all.*

*You called and cried out loud
and shattered my deafness.
You were radiant and resplendent,
you put to flight my blindness
You were fragrant,
And I drew my breath
and now pant after you
I tasted you, and I feel but hunger
and thirst for you.
You touched me
And I am set on fire to attain
the peace which is yours.*



■ Hermitage of Foucauld inside, the Hoggar Mountains, Algeria

“You value that which you love”

Shortly after Charles’ conversion, Fr Huvelin, who became his spiritual director, told him: “You value that which you love.” “But where can you learn to love?” asked Charles. Fr Huvelin’s reply was very precise and decisive: “From the Eucharist! Our Lord gives His entire self in the Eucharist, without reserve. The Eucharist is the mystery of self-giving. It is God who gives Himself. From the Eucharist we must learn to be a gift to others, as we can only speak of giving when we actually give ourselves.” These words touched Charles de Foucauld deeply, as also did others which he received at much the same time: “We must focus on God’s unending gift, which is the Eucharist. Can I ever tire or grow weary of giving myself, when I see how Jesus gives us the gift of Himself all the time? It is the Eucharist which teaches us to give the gift of ourselves to others and which says to us: ‘Do this, do this always until the end’. You can never give as much as Jesus gives you, you are incapable of so humbling yourself, as He did, in giving us Himself.”

And so, Charles leaves everything behind in order to enter the Trappist order. It is January 1890. In February 1893, he begins his theological studies at the Gregorian University in Rome. In July 1893 came the first thoughts of founding a community in Nazareth, plans which he shared with his spiritual director. In 1896, he obtained permission from Fr Huvelin to leave the Trappists, a calling which received the official sanction of his superiors in 1897. On 12th February 1897, he was released from simple vows and took

two private vows: celibacy and poverty, meaning that he would possess nothing beyond the tools necessary for manual work. On 24th February 1897, he came for a second time to the Holy Land, where he undertook to serve the Poor Clares’ Convent in Nazareth. Two years later, he took the decision to remain there permanently. From 19th to 21st May 1899, during a retreat, Charles finished writing a new Rule for the Little Brothers of Jesus. A year later, at the urging of Father Huvelin and of the Poor Clares, he undertook a series of retreats and preparations to be ordained a priest and was ordained on 9th June 1901 in France.

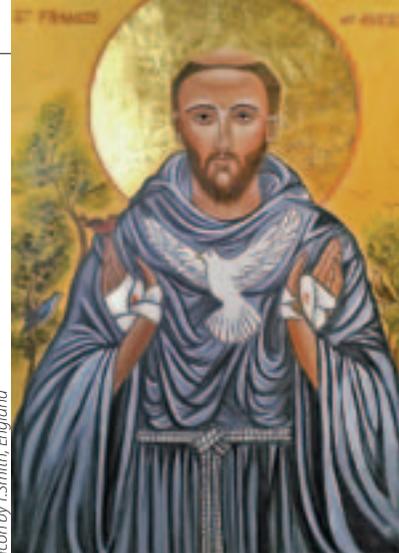
On 28th October 1901, now a priest, Charles comes to say his first Mass at Beni-Abbes in Algeria. This was on 30th October, the 15th anniversary of his conversion. He remained there until 1904, doing works of charity, nursing the wounded, trying to combat slavery and working on his Rule for the Little Sisters of Jesus. In 1904, he went to Tamanrasset, where he lived among the Tuareg until his martyrdom.

The beatification process for Charles de Foucauld was closed at the diocesan level on 4th March 2003 in Milan and his beatification took place on 13th November in Rome. His liturgical commemoration is on 1st December.



Holy Angels do not cease to draw even the greatest of sinners on the road to the House of our Merciful Father. Give them hope, tell them that the doors of penitence stand ever open, behind which our loving Father stands waiting for them with open arms. Amen.

Fr **Henryk Skoczylas** CSMA



Icon by T.Smith, England

PRAYERS

Make me an instrument of Your peace

Lord, make me
an instrument of your peace;
where there is hatred,
let me sow love;
where there is discord, unity;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is error, truth;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.
Divine Master grant
that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood,
as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in forgetting self
that we find ourselves;
it is in pardoning
that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying
that we are born to eternal life.

by **Saint Francis of Assisi**

Gift from God and the holy angels

I am sharing my story of a gift of consolation from Our Lord and the Holy Angels. My husband died from pneumonia and septicaemia when he was aged 38 in 1992. He had been feeling unwell for a few days, but would not go to the doctor.

I was working night duty as a midwife and on the Saturday night left for work feeling worried about him. When I returned from work in the morning my husband had died and I found him on the floor. It was so terrible and shocking. At this time my children were aged 12 and 8.

Life has been very hard since then, but we have lived through it with God's grace and help. We have been very blessed with good family and friends.

The fact that my husband Alan died without me being with him and alone has broken my heart. Every year around 26th April when he died,

the feelings return and I could not bear to think of him being alone when he died.

A few years ago in April, Fr Peter Prusakiewicz CSMA came to our church in Lincoln, to talk to us about Divine Mercy and the Holy Angels. After his visit I prayed to God about my sadness about Alan's death and how I felt about him being alone.

During this prayer Jesus made me aware that Alan was not alone when he died. My eyes were closed, but I could see in the room the place where he died, where he was lying, that he was surrounded by a shining light. The light was bright, like individual

candle flames in a circle, reaching from the floor to the ceiling. I was made aware that what I could see were angels and that Alan was not alone or afraid when he died. He was surrounded by angels.

I have to thank God for this gift of consolation. I do not feel sad, because I know the angels were with him when he died. I am so blessed to have experienced this and I know I have to share it to help other people to know about the holy angels and God's mercy.

Winnifred Blanchard,
Lincoln, England

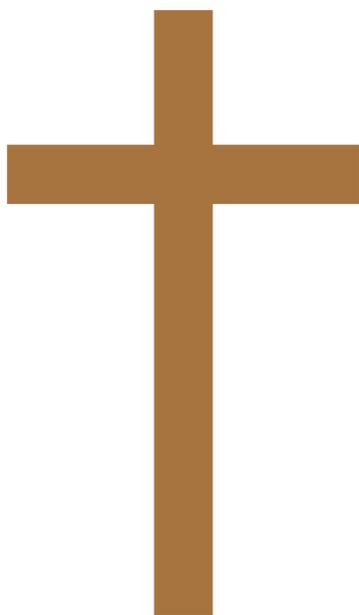
Christian symbols

We would like to start a new series of articles devoted to symbolism. Surrounded by symbols in our daily life, we often do not know or understand their sense. Christian symbols convey sacred significance.

The Latin cross

is the most widely known symbol of Christianity and Passion of Jesus Christ. It is a sign of His love towards man and His victory over Satan, sins and death. It is believed that this was the shape of the actual cross that Jesus was crucified on.

As distinct from a bare cross, a **crucifix** has got an image of Jesus on the cross.



The Greek cross

is another form of Christ's cross. It symbolises the crucifixion of Christ and universalism of Christianity, which is emphasized



by the cross' symmetry: all four arms are of equal length. According to the Greek Fathers of the Church, Christ stretched on the cross embraces the four directions of the Earth: North, South, East and West.

The Tau cross

(pronunciation rhymes with 'now') has the shape of the Greek capital letter T. It is also the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Usually made of wood, sometimes it is called the Old testament cross or St Anthony's cross. Beloved by St Francis of Assisi, who used it as a seal in his letters. In the Book of Ezekiel it was a sign of being chosen by God and saved from extermination: "And the Lord said to him: Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it" (Ez 9:4)



▶ The St Andrew's cross

has the shape of a letter X. It has two meanings: 1) the letter X is the first letter of 'Christ' in Greek (χριστός). 2) St Andrew died bound to a X-shaped cross.



■ The Crucifixion of St Andrew by Guillaume Courtois, fresco, 1668

The ferula or Papal cross

is a cross with three horizontal bars used for the office of the Pope in

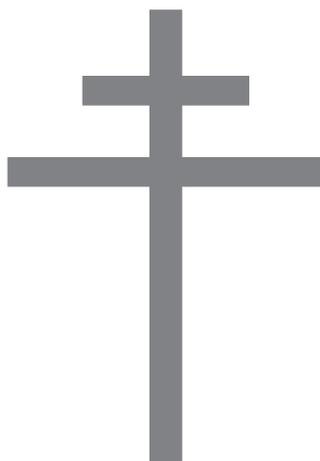


■ Rendition of the coat of arms of Pope Pius IX with supporters: two angels, each holding a papal cross

ecclesiastical heraldry. The three bars represent the Holy Trinity as well as the Pope's triple role as the Bishop of Rome, the Patriarch of the West and the Chief of the Apostles.

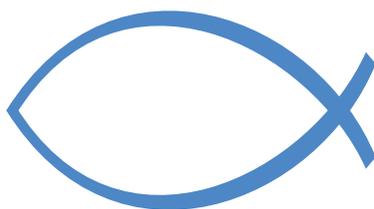
The Patriarch cross

as distinct from the papal cross has only two horizontal bars. It may be used by cardinals in their coats of arms. Nowadays we can see it in the coats of arms of Hungary, Slovakia and Lithuania.



The Ichtyus

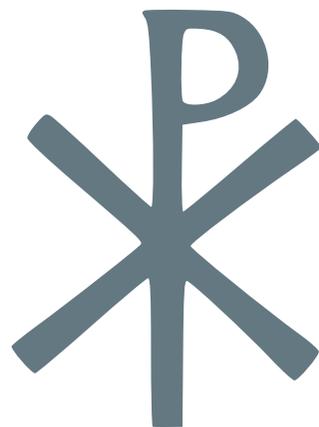
was a secret symbol for early Christians used to communicate during persecutions by government authorities. It refers to the biblical calling of the fishermen by Jesus and the miraculous multiplication of five loaves and two fish (Matthew 14:13-21). The word 'Ichtyus' is an acrostic of the first letters of the Greek phrase 'Iesous



Christos Theou Yios Soter' meaning 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour'. It is also a symbol of the Eucharist.

The Chi Rho

is an abbreviation of the name of Jesus Christ. In Greek the two first letters of 'Christ' are 'Chi' (an X shape) and 'Rho' (a P shape).



The IHS

There are three different explanations of this abbreviation:

1) These are three first capital letters of the name of Jesus in Greek ΙΗΣΟΥΣ. With time the letter Σ became a Latin S.

2) The abbreviation of the Latin phrase 'Iesus Hominum Salvator' meaning 'Jesus, The Saviour of man'.

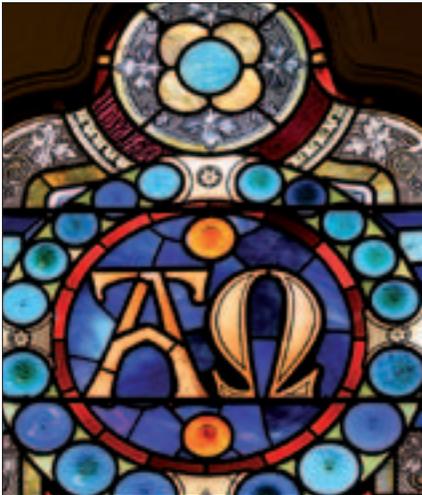


3) The abbreviation of the Latin phrase 'In hoc signo (vinces)' meaning 'In this sign you will conquer'.

Later adopted by St Ignatius of Loyola as a symbol of the Jesuit Order.

Alpha and Omega

are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. As a Christian symbol it refers to the title of Christ in the Book of Revelation: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Rev 22:13). It emphasizes the eternal nature of and omnipotence of Jesus Christ.



The Lamb

is a symbol of Christ, the Paschal Lamb and His sacrificial death, His crucifixion and resurrection. In the old Testament a lamb's blood saved the Israelites: "The Lord said: The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:13). In the New



Testament the lamb symbol appears in the depiction of the end of time. Jesus-The Lamb is going to marry His Bride-The Church: "Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready" (Rev 19:7).

Please note that when a lamb appears with a shepherd, it changes the meaning. In such a picture Jesus is the Good Shepherd and we are His sheep that He takes care of, leads and protects.

IC XC NIKA

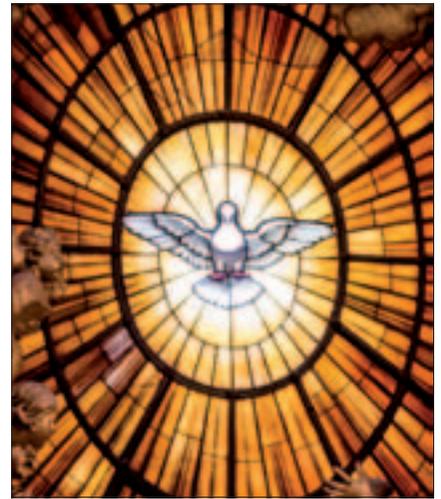
In Greek IC stands for Jesus, XC – Christ. NIKA refers to 'victory'. The symbol of Jesus Christ the Victor



brings faith and hope particularly in the face of adversity.

The dove

The Holy Spirit represents the third person of the Holy Trinity from a dove to a flame. Being often depicted as a dove, based on the account of the Holy Spirit descending like a dove on Jesus at his baptism. (The scene is said to manifest the Holy



Trinity: the voice from above is God the Father, Jesus is the Son of God and the dove is the Holy Spirit, cf. Matthew 3:13-17) and the Pentecost during which the Apostles were given numerous gifts of the Holy Spirit. On early Christians' tombs the dove symbolized the peace and happiness of a soul. In the Old Testament the dove appears with an olive branch bringing Noah hope for a dry land after the Great Flood. This was the sign of peace and end of God's judgment (Gen 8:1-11).

Agata Pawlowska,
CSMA editorial office, Marki, Poland

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The Angelic Chaplet

In 2013 Pope Francis blessed a statue of the Prince of the Heavenly Host in the Vatican Gardens. Many people began wearing the Scapular of St Michael and saying Pope Leo XIII's Prayer of Exorcism. There are also those who pray the extraordinary, and now increasingly popular, Chaplet to St Michael and the choirs of angels.



■ Virgin and Child with Saints by Benvenuto Tisi da Garofalo, 1530 (St Michael on the left)

The Chaplet to St Michael and the nine choirs of angels has a long tradition, reaching back to the eighteenth century. According to pious tradition, in 1751, the venerable Carmelite, Antonia d'Astonac was given this devotion in a vision by St Michael the Archangel. The Prince of the Heavenly Host wished to be asked for his intercession nine times together with the nine choirs of angels. Each call for his intercession should include the name of one of

the angelic choirs, together with the recitation of the "Our Father" and three "Hail Marys". The chaplet is to end with the recitation of the "Our Father" four times, in honour of St Michael, St Gabriel, St Raphael and the guardian angels.

In this private revelation, St Michael promised that those who fervently recite this chaplet will be granted the favours they ask in a spirit of faith, will be accompanied by the angels when they receive Holy Communion as well as being

accorded their constant protection throughout their lives as well as a hasty release from purgatory. On 8th September 1851, Pope Pius X granted special indulgences to those reciting the Chaplet to St Michael and the Holy Angels.

During the blessing of the statue of St Michael the Archangel, Pope Francis said: "Although it is one of several works of art in the Vatican Gardens, the statue of St Michael the Archangel has particular significance. It is actually not just a work of art, but an invitation to prayer and reflection. Michael - whose name means *Who is like God!* - is a warrior fighting for the primacy of God, for His transcendence and power. Michael is fighting to re-establish Divine Justice - defends the People of God against its foes, particularly His greatest foe, who is the Devil. St Michael is victorious because God Himself acts through him".

May these words of Pope Francis be for us an invitation to prayer through the intercession of St Michael. May the Angelic Chaplet resound in our ears and encourage us to become warriors, fighting for the primacy of God in our lives. May the victorious sword of St Michael protect us against the greatest enemy in our lives, who is Satan.

Fr Rafal Szwajca CSMA

First Saturday Devotion

Our Lady of Fatima desired for the Five First Saturdays devotion in 1917. On December 1925 She revealed more details to Sister Lúcia, one of the three seers of Fatima. From that time this devotion spread throughout the world. Although there is no official distinct confraternity of it, many people incorporate it into their life.



■ December 2016: A visitation of the statue of Our Lady of Fatima to Belarus

Why Saturdays?

The Church has traditionally honoured Our Lady on Saturday. It is a day devoted to the Mother of God.

Why five?

As the Lord Himself explained it to Sister Lúcia in 1930, reparations for five first consecutive Saturdays refer to five kinds of offences and blasphemies against the Immaculate Heart of Mary:

1. Attacks upon the reality of Mary's Immaculate Conception
2. Attacks against the reality of Mary's Perpetual Virginity
3. Attacks upon Mary's Divine Maternity and the refusal to accept her as the Mother of all mankind
4. For those who try to publicly implant in children's hearts indifference, contempt and hatred for Immaculate Mary
5. For those who insult Mary directly in her sacred images.

How to draw the thorns out?

The Infant Jesus appearing to Sister Lúcia said: "Have pity on the

Heart of your Most Holy Mother. It is covered with thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment, and there is no one to remove them with an act of reparation."

For five first consecutive Saturdays, with a particular intention of reparation for the above-mentioned offences, one should do as follows:

1. Go to confession. You can go to confession eight days before or after the first Saturday but Holy Communion must be taken in the state of grace.
2. Receive Holy Communion.
3. Recite five decades of the Rosary.
4. As Our Lady said: "Keep me company for fifteen minutes while meditating on the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary". It may be done at the church by the Blessed Sacrament if possible.

What if I forget the intention?

Don't worry! Jesus thought of it, too. In 1926, on Sister Lúcia's question "My Jesus, what about those who forget to make the intention?",

Jesus answered: "They can do so at their next confession, taking advantage of their first opportunity to go to confession."

Our Lady's gratitude

If you faithfully follow Her requests, Our Lady will not leave you without a wonderful reward: "I promise to assist at the hour of death with the graces necessary for salvation." In other words, we will not die in a state of a mortal sin.

What's next?

After completing the Five First Saturdays devotion you may wish to continue simply to console Our Lady. You may also choose a day or two a month in which you attend Mass and receive Holy Communion to make reparations of Her Immaculate Heart or to atone for the sins of the world.

CSMA editorial office
Marki, Poland

Angel - a warden of chastity

An imagining of the life of St Cecilia

Dear Saint Cecilia, one thing we know for certain about you is that you became a heroic martyr in fidelity to your divine Bridegroom. We do not know that you were a musician but we are told that you heard Angels sing. Inspire musicians to gladden the hearts of people by filling the air with God's gift of music and reminding them of the divine Musician who created all beauty. Amen

Valerian breathed with difficulty. He was so overcome by what he was seeing, that he opened his mouth, which had gone quite dry, and simply gaped at her. She appeared so unbelievably delightful as she combed her glistening hair, with a slight smile on her lips, that he was quite enraptured. Cecilia, whom he had married that very day, was so beautiful that he feared to profane her by his touch.

She seemed, as it were, enfolded in delightful music, the sweet tones of which filled the alcove. He was lost for breath, for air...only capable of standing motionless, while with his whole heart he imbibed her entrancing grace. Drunk with the sight, he lifted a hand to grasp the source of his happiness, when she uttered the short but decided words "Don't touch me", at which he froze painfully.

He froze, struck by the unpleasant sensation. By Jove! That a wife could think she could simply push him away as if he were some callow youngster. Anger awoke in him, but Cecilia took hold of his hands and whirled him around in a dance. Valerian's fury was immediately extinguished in her smiling eyes, and he once again drowned in a sensation of joy and in the heavenly brightness radiating from her face.

She seduced him by her beauty. He melted like wax in her presence and already knew that Cecilia could do anything she wanted with him. He,

a proud patrician from a respected family, would have gone to the ends of the earth for her, like a dog with its mistress, gambolling joyfully whenever it got her attention.

"My dearest, an angel stands guard over my chastity. I have given my heart to Christ."

Valerian wanted to die from sheer joy. She had used the words "My dearest, my dearest!!!" Such sweet and affectionate words came from her shining lips. But, wait a moment... a Christian? An angel? What did this all mean? They said that Christians were worshippers of a strange religion that sacrificed children... Caesar imposed the death penalty on all who professed this new religion.

The newly-weds talked for a number of hours, speaking together of life and of God. Valerian wished to glimpse the angel standing beside his beloved. Cecilia sent her husband to see old Urban, who served among the poor on the Via Appia. This was

the Pope in person, who secretly baptised Valerian. On returning home, the now converted Valerian saw the divine messenger, standing over the praying Cecilia. The angel presented them with two wreaths, of roses and of lilies, symbolising purity.

Tiberius was enraged at his brother. The Mars-like, impulsive Valerian, now seemed more to resemble Pax, the goddess of peace. He no longer asked for his slaves to be scourged for the slightest misdemeanour. He now treated them with surprising gentleness and even knew them by name. He no longer got drunk at feasts, but would eat only a few grapes and leave. "He can't wait to get home to the little wife" was the comment of the older men and the concubines pursed their lips in anger.

Oh, that Cecilia! This sudden change in Valerian must be her doing! He had been pierced by Cupid's arrow and Tiberius was deprived of a companion in his revels. Oh, how he hated her! There was a hidden

jealousy at the root of Tiberius' rage. Valerian appeared happy as never before, and Cecelia... that little Aphrodite had also entranced her brother-in-law.

One evening, Valerian had once again slipped silently out from a feast. Tiberius sobered up immediately; he shook off the embrace of several concubines and quickly moved towards the gate. Were it not for the moonlight, his younger brother would have been unable to observe Valerian, who, swathed in a dark cloak, walked through the dark, empty, narrow, stone streets.

The cave in the forest seemed to whisper in the indigo darkness. From time to time, hooded figures would silently fade into the space behind the rock, appearing either separately or in pairs from different parts of the forest. Valerian had also melted into the darkness. Tiberius held his breath. What was happening? By Jove, what kind of secret meeting was this? What had Valerian got himself mixed-up in? Hidden behind a large tree trunk, Tiberius waited until the men guarding the entrance had themselves gone in. A while later, bent double, he approached the mystery. What had seemed to be the whispering sound of the cavern, turned out to be songs of praise to God. All those gathered there, despite not being related, behaved as if they were family: they smiled and laughed, they held hands, they prayed and sang together. Despite the lack of space and air, no one complained.

The shocked Tiberius absorbed the sight of these people, all radiant with some inward light. He was suddenly overcome by Love as Power personified. The God whom these people worshipped, was what his heart had been yearning for all his life. The feasts, the hunts, the concubines, had only been



■ St Cecilia with an Angel by Orazio Gentileschi, 1618-1621

substitutes for genuine, true joy; the Roman gods, nothing but statues.

So these were Christians? This was their God? Tiberius wished to belong to them.

When Valerian and Cecilia were returning home, just before daybreak, a slight rustling noise suddenly rooted them to the spot. Cecilia shivered and looked anxiously at her husband.

“Come out, whoever you are! We know you are watching us!” barked Valerian.

Silently, Tiberius emerged from the thicket. Cecilia called out in surprise. Valerian went suddenly white.

“B... b... brother,” he stammered.

Cecilia was the first to come to her senses.

“Are you alone?” she asked quickly, looking nervously about her.

Her brother-in-law nodded.

“Good. Come with us! Valerian, get a move on!”

After that memorable night, the three became inseparable. Tiberius received the Sacrament of Baptism at the hands of Pope Urban. Devoting themselves to charitable work, they showed love to all those whom God placed in their path. As before,

nobody could remain indifferent to Cecilia. When she walked or when she spoke, she did so as if to the rhythm of a music which lay within her very soul. Men would be as if rooted to the spot, attracted by her harmonious grace and her radiant holiness. Cecilia would eagerly make use of the opportunity to spread the Word of God. She even managed to win for Christ some of the soldiers who came to arrest her after she had been denounced.

Valerian, Tiberius and Cecilia were beheaded and died as martyrs. In the year 822 or 824, her body was found, incorrupt, in the Catacombs of St Callixtus, after which it was transferred to the basilica beyond the Tiber.

Cecilia had discovered God and joyfully followed His call. For her, as much as for us “the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us (Romans 5:5).” Brothers and sisters, your smile and kind words are a witness to a living faith for others.

Agata Pawlowska

CSMA editorial office, Marki, Poland

Pilgrim's Progress

Shake the dust from your feet
Smile at everyone you meet
Help fellow pilgrims, take their hand
Journey through the Promised Land.

At the Jordan waters muddy and cold
A clear boundary line from battles of old
The fast moving river laps over each side
Opposing soldiers, patrolling with pride.

Political relations with countries intense
To you and me, it doesn't make sense
Love and respect one another then all will be fine
Israel, Jericho, Palestine.

Through churches and streets, and down cobbled lanes
Slipping and sliding, over some rough terrain
Praying and walking is all that we do
Giving God's witness, we set out to do.

Nazareth to Bethlehem, we travel and still
Have further to go, on to Calvary's hill
Where the Lord, was born, lived and died
Preparing our place on the other side.

No more to this land will I return!
To walk in Christ's footsteps, I did yearn
Now others will come and for themselves see
The life of the Man, from Galilee.

Allison Black, Scotland



■ The city of Jerusalem, Israel

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23rd April 2017

Divine Mercy Sunday

Christ the King Catholic Church
2829 W Lincoln Ave,
Anaheim, CA 92801
Contact: Loudy Carroll
Email: loudyz@aol.com
Phone: +1-714-624-6561

24th - 26th of April 2017

Divine Mercy Mission

The Holy Cross Parish,
2300 Main Street, Batavia,
Illinois 60510-7625
Contact: Fr James Parker
Email: frparker@holycross-batavia.org
Phone: +1- 630-879-4750

SCOTLAND

14th - 16th July 2017

The Divine Mercy retreat

Craig Lodge, Dalmally

Argyll. PA33 1AR
Phone: +44 (0)183-8200-216
Email: mail@craiglodge.org
www.craiglodge.org

10th - 12th November 2017

The Angels retreat

Craig Lodge, Dalmally
Argyll. PA33 1AR
Phone: +44 (0)183-8200-216
Email: mail@craiglodge.org
www.craiglodge.org

WALES

3rd - 5th March 2017

Divine Mercy retreat

Franciscan Friary
Monastery Road, Pantasaph
Holywell, Flintshire CH8 8PE
Contact: Anne Davies
Email: pantasaph@gmail.com
Website: www.pantasaph.org.uk
/retreat_centre_booking_info.html

5th - 7th October 2017

Divine Mercy Mission

Church of the Sacred Heart
School Road
Morrison Swansea SA6 6HZ
Contact: Fr Jason Jones
Email: corjesutreforys@yahoo.com
Phone: +44 (1) 792-771-053

8th October 2017

9:00 am and 11:00 am Masses

Our Lady of Lourdes Church
136 Penygraig Road, Townhill,
Swansea SA1 6LA
Contact: Fr Artur Strzepka
Phone +44 (0) 179-265-5336

13th - 15th October 2017

The Angels retreat

Franciscan Friary
Monastery Road, Pantasaph
Holywell, Flintshire CH8 8PE
Contact: Anne Davies
Email: pantasaph@gmail.com

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.