

The Angels

Messengers from a loving God

An angel
as a lifesaver

Opus
Angelorum

Bl. Michael Sopoćko

A window
into purgatory

Teach me, St Joseph



“You are the secretary of My Mercy. I have chosen you for that office in this life and the next life. That is how I want it to be in spite of all the opposition they will give you. Know that My choice will not change” (Diary, 1605).



It is a pleasure to welcome you to the tenth anniversary year of ‘The Angels magazine’.

I got to know St Faustina in Cracow when they made me the chaplain to the Sisters of Mercy and I gained more knowledge by reading as many books as possible and talking with the sisters.

There were three apostles of the Divine Mercy. The first was St Faustina. The second was Blessed Michael Sopoćko and the third was St John Paul II.

God has the plan for each one of us. St Faustina had a very short life, 33 years in fact, the same amount of years as Jesus. Her mission is being continued in heaven. She was a visionary and one of the greatest mystics of the Church with gifts such as bilocation, prophecy and she foretold her death and the death of other sisters, her beatification and her canonisation.

Upon joining the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy aged 20, Helena took on the name Sister Mary Faustina. The last five years of St Faustina’s life were the most important

and fruitful, many things happened in Vilnius. It is in Vilnius at aged 28 she met her confessor Fr Michael Sopoćko and where the Divine Chaplet was dictated to her, she received the revelation at the Hour of Mercy, found an artist to paint the Divine Mercy Image which is hanging in St Michael the Archangel Church in Vilnius’ Old Town.

“Oh, what great graces I will grant to souls who say this chaplet... At the hour of their death, I defend every soul that will say this chaplet as I do my own glory... I desire that this mercy flow out upon the whole world through your heart.”

Today the Divine Mercy Chaplet is the most popular prayer after the holy rosary.

I assure you of the constant prayer of the priests of the Congregation of St Michael the Archangel for all the readers of ‘The Angel magazine’ and their families.

God bless you.

Fr **Peter Prusakiewicz** CSMA
www.stmichaelthearchangel.info
www.stmichaelthearchangel.us

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A window into purgatory

About the cover: “The purgatory, the promise of God’s Mercy”. The icon 28x34 inches / Birch gessoed panel / 24k gold leaf / acrylic.

Icons have been called “windows to heaven” because they let you see inside it. Or, in this case, see inside purgatory. But as with most views, icons are two-way. As you look in, the ones depicted in the painting are looking out... at you.

When author Susan Tassone asked me to “write” an icon – the verb used for creating the icon – for the cover of this book, the proposal excited me because I’ve long been interested in, and curious about, purgatory.

As always, before beginning, I researched the intended subject and, more importantly, I prayed. I spent time before the Blessed Sacrament, asking for guidance. I asked Lord to guide the hands of His unworthy servant so that I may worthily and perfectly portray His icon. I asked him to forgive my sins and the sins of those who will venerate the icon. And as she always does, a dear friend sent out e-mails asking others to pray, because icons aren’t written on technique alone.

Fundamental to any icon is its symbolism. Symbols play a key role from the very beginning of preparation to the icon’s completion. These

are the symbols I’ve included in “purgatory, the promise of God’s Mercy”.

The panel

The icon is written on a birch panel. The board’s vertical dimension is symbolic of the tree of Life, and its horizontal dimension represents the Tree of Knowledge. Together they’re reminder of Paradise. A piece of white linen cloth – symbolic of Jesus’ shroud – was glued to the board with rabbit-skin glue. Then ten or more coats of white marble gesso (a paint made with marble dust) were applied to it. The white gesso represents the light of creation.

The image of Christ

- The raised clouds behind Christ are the heavens. They’re gold-leafed using 24k gold. The gold is symbolic of heaven.
- Christ is the focus of the icon. His wounds are present, to help us always remember how He suffered for us.



■ “The purgatory, the promise of God’s Mercy”, icon by Vivian Imbruglia, USA

- Around Christ’s head is a halo, the universal symbol of holiness. Inside the halo is the Cross of Salvation, its three arms a Holy Trinity. The Greek letters “ω’Ο Ν” mean “I Am Who I Am” (Ex 3:14).
- Embossed in gold on each side of Christ’s head are the letters “IC” and “XC,” a widely used four-letter abbreviation of the Greek for Jesus (IHCOYC) Christ (XPICTOC).
- One of Christ’s hands blesses us, and the other points to His heart, which holds one of Christ’s greatest gifts: His Mercy. His Divine Mercy rays extend to all those in purgatory.

Our Lady Star of Sea

- In times past, navigators used Polaris, the North Star, to guide them because it holds a fixed position in the sky. Mar, too, guides us, which is why the icon features an embossed star on the top of her head.

- St Faustina wrote, “I saw Our Lady visiting the souls in purgatory. The souls call her ‘The Star of the Sea.’ She brings them refreshment” (Diary, 20). This is why in her left hand, Our Lady is holding a seashell with droplets of water spilling from it.
- Mary’s mantle is painting like crashing waves, and on her heart is the Eucharist, with the letters “HIS” (a “Christogram” – a combination of letters that represent the holy name “Jesus”). She is the Mother of Eucharist.
- Our Lady holds a rosary in her right hand, offering to an angel who’s lifting a soul from purgatory. Those beads, those prayers, are a link, a ladder: soul to angel to Mary to Christ.
- The fire is symbolic of their burning love for God, their longing to see His face. So, in the icon, their hearts are painted on fire, with the image of a cross behind them, representing Christ.
- The souls represent various types of people from around the world. They’re shown praying not for themselves but for us. Some are pleading for Masses and prayers.
- Three of the souls are painted in white because their time of purification has been completed. They’re being pulled out by their guardian angels who are escorting them to heaven.

Most artists sign the front of their work, but I never sign an icon that way. Never. This would be boastful because the icon isn’t “mine”. Instead, I write on the back in small letters: “Written by the hand of Vivian Imbruglia” and the date.

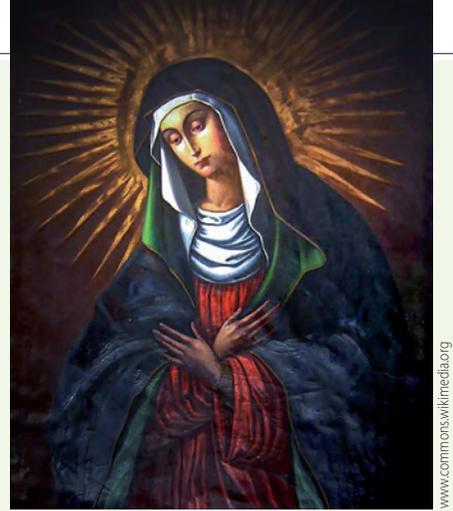
Somewhere in the icon, hardly visible, are the letters AMDG, which stand for “Ad maiorem Dei gloriam”: “For the greater glory of God”. All my work is for His greater glory. This is a belief I live and work by.

My final responsibility is to be the first person to pray with the icon itself. At that point, I cease to see it as my own work of art and view it as the presence of the person or event it reveals.

My job as iconographer is to allow the Holy Spirit to guide my hand and then I stand back and disappear.

Now my prayer is that, while venerating this icon, you’ll have the desire to pray for the souls in purgatory.

Vivian Imbruglia, iconographer, USA
www.sacredimageicons.com



■ Lady of the Gate of Dawn, Vilnius, Lithuania

Our Lady is the best teacher of spiritual life ever

Fix your gaze upon the Passion of My Son

Mary is my instructress, who is ever teaching me how to live for God. My spirit brightens up in Your gentleness and Your humility, O Mary (Diary, 620).

In the evening, when I was praying, the Mother of God told me, “Your lives must be like Mine: quiet and hidden, in unceasing union with God, pleading for humanity and preparing the world for the second coming of God” (Diary, 625).

I prepared for this feast with greater zeal than in previous years. On the morning of the feast itself, I experienced an inner struggle at the thought that I must leave this congregation which enjoys such special protection from Mary. This struggle lasted through the meditation and through the first Mass as well.

During the second Mass, I turned to our Holy Mother, telling Her that it was difficult for me to separate myself

St Faustina

St Faustina is also shown holding rosary beads. In her “Diary” she wrote that Jesus said to her: “Say unceasingly the chaplet that I have taught you. Whoever will recite it will receive great mercy at the hour of death” (Diary, 687).

Purgatory

When I was growing up, purgatory seemed a scary place, with fire and great suffering. It looked like a hell to me. After reading Susan’s books and having many conversations with their author, I came to a better understanding of what purgatory must be like. St Faustina described it as “a mist place full of fire in which there was a great crowd of suffering souls” (Diary, 20).

All eyes on Christ

from this congregation... 'which is under Your special protection, O Mary.' Then I saw the Blessed Virgin, unspeakably beautiful.

She came down from the altar to my kneeler, held me close to herself and said to me, 'I am Mother to you all, thanks to the unfathomable mercy of God. Most pleasing to Me is that soul which faithfully carries out the will of God.' She gave me to understand that I had faithfully fulfilled the will of God and had thus found favour in His eyes. 'Be courageous. Do not fear apparent obstacles, but fix your gaze upon the Passion of My Son, and in this way you will be victorious' (Diary, 330).

The Infant Jesus in Her arms

Once, the confessor told me to pray for this intention, and I began a novena to the Mother of God. This novena consisted in the prayer, 'Hail, Holy Queen,' recited nine times. Toward the end of the novena I saw the Mother of God with the Infant Jesus in Her arms, and I also saw my confessor kneeling at Her feet and talking with her. I did not understand what he was saying to Her, because I was busy talking with the Infant Jesus, who came down from His Mother's arms and approached me. I could not stop wondering at His beauty. I heard a few of the words that the Mother of God spoke to him [i.e., my confessor] but not everything. The words were: 'I am not only the Queen of Heaven,

but also the Mother of Mercy and your Mother.' And at that moment She stretched out her right hand, in which She was clasping her mantle, and She covered the priest with it. At that moment, the vision vanished (Diary, 330).

Take My Dearest Treasure

February 2, [1936]. In the morning, when the bell awoke me, I was so overcome by drowsiness which I could not shake off that I jumped into cold water, and after two minutes the sleepiness left me. When I came to meditation a host of absurd thoughts swarmed into my head, so much so that I had to struggle throughout the whole meditation. It was the same during prayer time, but when Mass began, a strange silence and joy filled my heart. Just then, I saw Our Lady with the Infant Jesus, and the Holy Old Man [St Joseph] standing behind them. The most Holy Mother said to me, 'Take My Dearest Treasure,' and She handed me the Infant Jesus. When I took the Infant Jesus in my arms, the Mother of God and Saint Joseph disappeared. I was left alone with the Infant Jesus (Diary, 608).

Keep my eyes fixed on the cross

All at once, I saw the image in some small chapel and at that moment I saw

that chapel became an enormous and beautiful temple. And in this temple I saw the Mother of God with the Infant in Her arms. And a moment later, the Infant Jesus disappeared from the arms of His Mother, and I saw the living image of Jesus Crucified. The Mother of God told me to do what She had done, that, even when joyful, I should always keep my eyes fixed on the cross, and She told me that the graces God was granting me were not for me alone, but for other souls as well (Diary, 561).

Fear nothing

March 25. In the morning, during meditation, God's presence enveloped me in a special way, as I saw the immeasurable greatness of God and, at the same time, His condescension to His creatures. Then I saw the Mother of God, who said to me, 'Oh, how pleasing to God is the soul that follows faithfully the inspirations of His grace! I gave the Saviour to the world; as for you, you have to speak to the world about His great mercy and prepare the world for the Second Coming of Him who will come, not as a merciful Saviour, but as a just Judge. Oh, how terrible is that day! Determined is the day of justice, the day of divine wrath. The angels tremble before it. Speak to souls about this great mercy while it is still the time for [granting] mercy. If you keep silent now, you will be answering for a great number of souls on that terrible day. Fear nothing. Be faithful to the end. I sympathise with you' (Diary, 635).

Bl. Michael Sopoćko resembled Jesus

Blessed Michael Sopoćko, Apostle of Divine Mercy, Servant of God, confessor and spiritual director to Sister Faustina.

Born: 1st November 1888,

Nowosady in Poland (now Lithuania)

Education: University of Warsaw

Priestly Ordination: 15th June 1914 Vilnius, Lithuania.

Military Chaplain: 1918-1932 in Vilnius and Warsaw.

Died: 15th February 1975, Białystok, Poland – the feast day of St Faustinus, the patron of St Faustina Kowalska.

Beatified: 26th September 2008, Fr Michael Sopoćko was raised from Servant of God to Blessed by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in the Divine Mercy Church in Białystok, Poland.



Fr Michael Sopoćko composed prayers to the Divine Mercy based on the texts of St Faustina, keeping in contact with her until the time of her death, and afterwards, took it upon himself to complete the tasks given to her in her apparitions.

In the Diary of St Faustina there are testimonies bearing witness to this holy priest.

St Faustina wrote in her Diary, “This priest is a great soul entirely filled with God” (Diary, 1238).

“He is a priest after My own heart (...) Through him it pleased me to proclaim the worship of My mercy” (Diary, 1256).

In another part of the Diary she wrote “His thought is closely united to mine, so be at peace about what concerns my work. I will not let him

make a mistake, and you should do nothing without his permission” (Diary, 1408).

His triple crown

St Faustina asked Jesus about Fr Sopoćko, she wrote “At this time, I saw a certain person (Fr Michael Sopoćko) and, in part, the condition of his soul and the ordeals God was sending him. His sufferings were of the mind and in a form so acute that I pitied him and said to the Lord, ‘Why do you treat him like that?’ And the Lord answered, ‘For the sake of his triple crown.’ the Lord also gave me to understand what unimaginable glory awaits the person who resembles the suffering Jesus here on earth. That person will resemble Jesus

in His glory. The Heavenly Father will recognize and glorify our soul to the extent that He sees in us a resemblance to His Son. I understood that this assimilation into Jesus is granted to us while we are here on earth. I see pure and innocent souls upon whom God has exercised His justice; these souls are the victims who sustain the world and who fill up what is lacking in the Passion of Jesus. They are not many in number. I rejoice greatly that God has allowed me to know such souls” (Diary, 604).

He studied theology at the University of Vilnius between 1910 and 1914. On 15th June 1914, he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Franciszek Karewicz. Between 1918 and 1932 he was a chaplain in the Polish Army in Warsaw and in Vilnius.

In 1927, Archbishop Romuald Jalbrzykowski entrusted to him the responsibility of being the Spiritual Director for the Major Seminary. During this same period he taught for the Faculty of Theology at Stefan Batory University, also in Vilnius. He eventually requested the Archbishop to release him from both the military pastoral care and from the seminary duties. His desire was to dedicate himself entirely to theological pursuits. In 1934, he received the title of 'docent' in pastoral theology. While teaching, he never forgot the importance of pastoral service. He was rector of St Michael Church and also served as a confessor for religious sisters.

One of the most significant events of Fr Sopoćko's life occurred in 1933, when he became the Spiritual Director of Saint Faustina Kowalska of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mary Mother of Mercy. He continued to assist the saint after his transfer to Lagiewniki, where she died on 5th October 1938. As her confessor, he undertook a thorough evaluation of Sr Faustina's mystical experiences concerning the devotion to the Divine Mercy. Following his advice, she wrote of these in her 'Diary'. To this day this remains a spiritual classic.

Life-giving inspiration

The Divine Mercy devotion became a life-giving inspiration for Fr Sopoćko. With his assistance, and under the direction of Sister Faustina, the artist Eugeniusz Kazimirowski painted the first portrait of 'Merciful Jesus'. Fr Sopoćko wrote extensively on the subject of the Divine Mercy,

and, in 1938 he established a committee charged with building the Divine Mercy Church in Vilnius. However, this attempt had to be delayed due to the onset of World War II. But despite the war and German occupation, Fr Sopoćko persisted in his efforts to promote the devotion to the Divine Mercy. Filled with zeal, he constantly helped those who were oppressed and threatened with extermination, for example, numerous Jewish people. Fortunately, he managed to avoid arrest and imprisonment. In 1942, along with his fellow seminary professors and students, he was forced to go into hiding near Vilnius. He remained concealed for two years. Yet it was during that very time when Fr Sopoćko played a major role in establishing a new religious congregation. According to the revelations of Saint Faustina, this congregation was to promote love for the Divine Mercy.

After the war, he wrote the congregation's constitution. And he became actively engaged in the growth and development of what we know as the Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Mercy.

In 1947, Archbishop Jalbrzykowski, who has been for two years in Białystok with his diocesan curia, sought for Fr Sopoćko to come to the same city. He therefore accepted a position as professor in the archdiocesan major seminary. There he taught pedagogy, catechetical, homiletical, pastoral theology and spirituality. Additionally, he continued to further the apostolate of the Divine Mercy. He also made serious efforts to obtain official approval for the Divine Mercy devotion from the church authorities. Fr Sopoćko worked tirelessly on the biblical, theological and pastoral bases by which to explain the doctrinal truth concerning

the Divine Mercy devotion. His publications were translated into numerous languages including: Latin, English, French, Italian and Portuguese.

Fr Michael Sopoćko died on February 15th, 1975, in his apartment on Poleska Street. He was popularly acclaimed for his sanctity. He was buried in the parish cemetery in Białystok. Following the inauguration of the process for his beatification, his body was moved to the Church of the Divine Mercy in November 30th, 1988.

Sister Faustina wrote in her Diary: "One evening as I entered my cell, I saw the Lord Jesus exposed in the monstrance under the open sky, as it seemed. At the feet of Jesus I saw my confessor, and behind him a great number of the highest ranking ecclesiastics, clothed in vestments the like of which I had never seen except in this vision; behind them, groups of religious from various orders; and further still I saw enormous crowds of people, which extended far beyond my vision. I saw the two rays coming out from the host, as in the image, closely united but not intermingled; and they passed through the hands of my confessor, then through the hands of the clergy and from their hands to the people, and then they returned to the host... And at that moment I saw myself once again in the cell which I had just entered" (Diary, 344).

This prophesy was fulfilled on September 28th, 2008, when he was declared Blessed Michael Sopoćko at a special Mass at the Church of Divine Mercy in Białystok, Poland.

Fr **George J. Bobowski**,
'Saint Faustina
and Blessed Michael Sopoćko'

Parts taken from www.timeofmercy.com

Let us learn from the angels

Opus Angelorum is a movement within the Catholic Church which raises controversy or fear among some of the faithful. The community established by Gabriele Bitterlich promoted devotion to angels. For many years their theories and practices gave rise to controversy which led to particular attention and study by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Father Bonifatius Markert ORC talks about Opus Angelorum's path to orthodoxy and its work today.

What is the God that you believe in?

“God is love!” God in the Holy Trinity called the whole creation into existence and loves all His creatures. God wants us to have life and have it abundantly. The Son of God saved us from our sins through His passion, death and resurrection, and opened heaven again. He is present in the Blessed Sacrament, offering Himself to us in incomprehensible love and wants us to love God above everything and our neighbour as ourselves. There is nothing more beautiful than knowing God, following His Gospel, and leading other people to Him. “And only where God is seen does life truly begin” (Pope Benedict XVI, Inaugural Homily, April 24, 2005).

Who are the angels, personally, to you? In what circumstances did you experience their tangible presence and help?



■ Fr Bonifatius Markert ORC

“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?” This description from the Letter of Hebrews (1:14) accurately reflects the essence and tasks of the holy angels. This can be easily understood when a person analyses the events of his or her life. In working with young people, during various scouting, adventurous ventures, during mountain climbing, skiing, driving a car, many times I was in great danger and experienced mysterious and powerful interventions of the angels. Their help saved me and others from accidents and even sudden death.

When I discerned my calling and then while preparing for the priesthood, I felt the angels' help in spiritual matters very clearly. It is hard for me to imagine many priestly activities without the help of the holy angels. Romano Guardini believes that the main purpose of the devotion to the holy guardian angels is the possibility of establishing a personal friendship between angel and man, leading to a greater glory of God.

How did Opus Angelorum start? What does this name mean?

We translate the Latin name “Opus Angelorum” (abbreviated

OA) as the “Work of the Holy Angels.” The work was created on White Sunday (now it is Divine Mercy Sunday), in 1949 in Innsbruck, Austria. A human tool to found this Work was Gabriele Bitterlich (called in the OA “Mother” or “Mother Gabriela”). From early childhood, she had great devotion to her guardian angel, who faithfully accompanied her in a life marked by suffering and led to a deep union with Christ. Obedient to her confessor she began recording her internal experiences from 1949. As she explored the mystery of the cross and salvation, the service of the holy angels to man became increasingly apparent to her. For many years, Mother Gabriele was under the spiritual care of the fathers of the Society of Jesus. In May 1951, the bishop of Innsbruck summoned her, appointed a spiritual director to her and gave her instructions to which Mother Gabriele was subordinated in utter obedience until the end of her life. More and more believers, including priests and religious, joined the new movement. Mother Gabriele died after severe suffering on April 4, 1978.

What is Opus Angelorum today? Is it a congregation, a third order, a movement, a brotherhood?

Opus Angelorum is a public association of the Catholic Church with legal personality in accordance with the Code of Canon Law, (can. 313). Its statutes are approved by the Holy See in accordance with canon 314. As a Catholic movement of the faithful, the association is now under the overall direction of the Order of Canons Regular of the Holy Cross.

Opus Angelorum was founded in Austria in 1949, but the first Brotherhood of Guardian Angels was founded in 1961. Could you briefly recall its beginnings and spirituality?

In the summer of 1958, a group of OA members, mainly priests, became involved in spreading the Work of the Holy Angels in the Church. On April 20, 1961, at the request of the bishop of Innsbruck, they presented the statute for the canonically founded Brotherhood of Guardian Angels. Members of the Brotherhood are particularly involved in supporting the Holy Church and priests and saving souls “with the help of holy angels.” They have devotion to the holy angels to praise God and serve His plan of salvation with them. The leadership of OA was in the hands of priests from the beginning. They sought to create a religious institute that would be the centre of the entire Work. The efforts of the leadership of OA to found the order led to the restoration of the Order of Canons Regular of the Holy Cross in 1979. The constitution of the Order says: “According to its tradition, the Order of the Cross sees its main task in reviving the devotion of holy angels as special help in the needs of our time.” In 2002, the Bishop of Innsbruck founded canonically the Community of the Sisters of the Holy Cross as the Institute of Consecrated Life. This community was attached to the Order of the Cross, and in 2018 it was raised to the rank of a community under papal law. According to its statute, Opus Angelorum today includes several subgroups, including the Brotherhood of Guardian Angels, the Work of Helpers for Priests, and the Community of Families. All these groups have church statutes.

In the first years the movement grew rapidly, mainly in Austria and Germany. Why was it so? Were people hungry for friendship with angels, wanting to meet them? What attracted people to OA?

The reason for the strong attraction of the faithful to Opus Angelorum after the Second Vatican Council may have been that it arose as a “response to the signs of the times, to include the help of holy angels in the spiritual struggle against atheism, secularization and materialism, with the decline of faith up to silent apostasy, with the disappearance of the sense of sin, with widespread violation of God’s law in many areas of life” (Statute OA, I, 3). Holy angels, fellow-servants of those “who have in themselves the testimony of Jesus” (Rev 19:10), help people to maintain faith in our Lord Jesus, God’s love, as well as clarity and discernment in the midst of spiritual confusion. They also help to recognize the perpetrator of all evil and to oppose his oppression.

What is Opus Angelorum currently focusing in terms of spirituality as well as actions?

According to the statutes, the essence and sense of the existence of OA consists in its close co-operation with angels united with God and people seeking God and salvation. The purpose of this cooperation is to get to know God better and to love Him more, to glorify God and to join together in building and strengthening God’s Kingdom on earth. The above goals are realised mainly by organisation of retreats. OA members are formed to realise the goals through prayer, penance and through willingness “to do good

at every opportunity” (Tit. 3:1) in a manner resembling the ministry of the guardian angel.

Your website lists seven virtues that help us to develop a closer relationship with angels. Could you discuss them briefly?

Yes, these are the following virtues: 1) Faithfulness. It is about loyalty to God, His angels and saints, to the Holy Church, its pastors, to the Work and its members. 2) Humility. It is understood as courage, joy and willingness to serve in life’s trials. 3) Obedience to lawful superiors. Obedience is to be unconditional, in accordance with the example of the holy angels. 4) Love. It is to be the centre of all thoughts, words and deeds. 5) Silence. Man must be able to remain silent internally to hear the Lord’s voice. Silence is to flow from unconditional union with God, from life in God. 6) Moderation. It is about keeping your own spiritual life in order. It is about purity, nobility, transparency and holiness. The man “holding the angel’s hand” keeps his thoughts in check, weighs his words, and avoids the lack of love and thoughtlessness. He doesn’t allow his actions to be governed by sympathy or antipathy. 7) Imitating Mary. Imitating her in service until sacred renunciation, which is a gift offered out of love for Him. Mary teaches us to follow Jesus.

Another aspect of the spirituality of Opus Angelorum is prayer in memory of the Passion - Passio Domini. Why is it so important according to OA?

Opus Angelorum is indeed a movement spreading the devotion to the holy angels but basically it

focuses on Christ the Saviour, the Cross and the Eucharist. So, holy angels are not of main importance to OA but Jesus Christ, our Saviour, as well as imitating Him in His saving love. Holy angels help us connect with Christ in His redemptive suffering. Our Heavenly Father strengthened Christ in the Gethsemane Garden by sending Him an angel (Luke 22:43).

To commemorate these events, we practice the pious “Passio Domini” exercise held on Thursday evenings and Friday afternoons every week. At this time OA members unite with the Saviour in the mystery of His Passion.

Do you also pray to St Michael the Archangel, the Prince of the heavenly hosts?

Yes, there is a prayer to the holy angels members of OA recite all over the world: “O glorious Prince of the heavenly host, Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in the battle and in the fearful warfare that we are waging against the principalities and powers, against the rulers of this world of darkness, against the evil spirits. Come thou to the assistance of men, whom Almighty God created immortal, making them in His own image and likeness and redeeming them at a great price from the tyranny of Satan. Fight this day the battle of the Lord with the legions of holy angels, even as of old thou didst fight against Lucifer, the leader of the proud spirits and all his rebel angels, who were powerless to stand against thee, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And that apostate angel, transformed into an angel of darkness who still creeps about the earth to encompass our ruin, was cast

headlong into the abyss together with his followers. But behold, that first enemy of mankind, and a murderer from the beginning, has regained his confidence. Changing himself into an angel of light, he goes about with the whole multitude of the wicked spirits to invade the earth and blot out the Name of God and of His Christ, to plunder, to slay and to consign to eternal damnation the souls that have been destined for a crown of everlasting life. This wicked serpent, like an unclean torrent, pours into men of depraved minds and corrupt hearts the poison of his malice, the spirit of lying, impiety and blasphemy, and the deadly breath of impurity and every form of vice and iniquity. These crafty enemies of mankind have filled to overflowing with gall and wormwood the Church, which is the Bride of the Lamb without spot; they have laid profane hands upon her most sacred treasures. Make haste, therefore, O invincible Prince, to help the people of God against the inroads of the lost spirits and grant us the victory. Amen” (indulg. by Leo XIII, 25 Sep. 1888).

In addition, we recommend that everyone often pray “St Michael the Archangel, defend us...” by Pope Leo XIII, especially during difficult times.

How many members does Opus Angelorum have? In which countries is OA most popular? Who is the most willing to join it?

Initially, OA enjoyed the greatest popularity in German-speaking countries. Over time it also developed in other countries such as Brazil, Poland and the USA. The members of Opus Angelorum are mainly Catholics who want to deepen their religious life. Currently OA has about 50,000 members.



■ Gabriele Bitterlich, the founder of Opus Angelorum

Who are members of OA?

Most people involved in Opus Angelorum are of middle and advanced age. But there are also families with children. We have a prayer – consecration of children to their guardian angels. Children do not need any special preparation for that prayer. And it does not result in membership in OA.

“Just as the four points of a compass direct us towards our goal when traveling, in the same way in the spiritual life the four fundamental directions lead us towards heaven in the company of the holy angels.” In the case of Opus Angelorum these are adoration, contemplation, expiation and mission. Can you tell us briefly about the spiritual directions of OA?

Adoration comes first. These include prayer, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and daily Mass with the reception of Holy Communion if possible. It's about living in God's presence. The second direction is meditation or contemplation. The subject of reflection is God's Word and God's saving

work. Expiation is the third direction. It is understood as penance for the sins of oneself and of all humanity, especially for the sanctification of priests and consecrated persons, as well as participation in the saving love of Christ. The fourth direction is mission. It includes cooperation in the apostolic mission of the Church, active help for one's neighbor and material and spiritual works of mercy, readiness to help where necessary.

To become a member of Opus Angelorum, one must make an act of consecration to one's guardian angel. The act is formally accepted by a priest from the Order of Canons Regular of the Holy Cross or by a delegated priest who is a member of OA on behalf of the Church. What is it about?

The act of consecration to one's guardian angel means a conscious decision to entrust and give oneself and one's life over to God through one's guardian angel. The foundation of this act is always based on the consecration to Christ in the Sacrament of Baptism and Confirmation.

In any act of consecration that is not directly addressed to God, but to Mary, holy angels or saints, the ultimate goal is always God. When we give ourselves to Mary or our guardian angel, we do it so that our relationship with God would be more perfect with their help. St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort used to say that “the more one is devoted to Our Lady, the more they belong to Christ”. This is the same case with our guardian angels. The more devoted to them we are, the more our guardian angel leads us to God, the more he helps us become like Christ.

What are the contents of the consecration?

O Holy Angels of God, here, in the presence of the Triune God and in the love of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer, I, N.N., poor sinner, want to make a covenant with you, who are his servants, so that in union with you, I might work with humility and fortitude for the glory of God and the coming of his Kingdom. Therefore, I implore you to assist me, especially - in the adoration of God and of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, - in the contemplation of the word and the salvific works of God, - in the imitation of Christ and in the love of his Cross in a spirit of expiation, - in the faithful fulfilment of my mission within the Church, serving humbly after the example of Mary, my heavenly Mother, your Queen. And you, my good guardian angel, who continually behold the face of our Father in heaven, God entrusted me to you from the very beginning of my life. I thank you with all my heart for your loving care. I commit myself to you and promise you my love and fidelity. I beg you: protect me against my own weakness and against the attacks of the wicked spirits; enlighten my mind and my heart so that I may always know and accomplish the will of God; and lead me to union with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Preparation for the consecration to the guardian angel takes a year. Two years in the case of the consecration to the holy angels. Can you tell us more about these preparations?

A prerequisite for consecration is a personal, living relationship with one's guardian angel. In preparation for it, we provide interested parties

with letters that explain the meaning and purpose of Opus Angelorum, as well as the way in which, with the help of holy angels, one can lead an authentic spiritual life for the glory of God, for love of Him and neighbour. But above all, the consecration to the guardian angel has an impact on man's personal life. It leads deeper into the essence of following Christ and results in a more intense participation in His saving work and in the mission of the Church.

What about the revelations of Gabriele Bitterlich called the Mother of OA? What impact did they have on the movement and its early spirituality? What was in them? The Holy See allowed their message to be used only to a limited extent...

As I have already mentioned, the revelations and mystical experiences of Mother Gabriele are at the very beginning of Opus Angelorum. OA would not exist without them. She accepted the words of the Lord: "I want to see My angels glorified among people. The time of angels comes, the great power of the good and the bad ones" as a fundamental and charismatic call to action. Mother Gabriele's visions gave an insight into the world of angels (holy and fallen ones), as well as contained revelations about the various mysteries of our faith, especially the mystery of the Cross. The Holy See has limited the use of private revelations, especially when it comes to theories about the world of angels, their own names, their groups and functions, which are foreign to Scripture and Tradition, and therefore cannot be the basis of the spirituality and activity of associations approved by the Church.

Some sceptics ask: can a movement based on revelations, the truth of which remains highly doubtful, bear good fruit?

The foundation of Opus Angelorum is not the visions of Mother Gabriele, but the Word of God contained in the Scripture and Tradition. Mother Gabriele also said that. Obedience to the Church was sacred to her and therefore she surrendered herself, as well as all her writings, without any restrictions, to the judgment of the Church. This is the genuine spirit of Opus Angelorum. Why wouldn't it bring good fruit?

How did the members of OA respond to the doubts expressed in 1984 and then in 1992 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith?

Most of them adopted church provisions in obedience to the church authorities. They promised it when joining Opus Angelorum.

Was it easy for OA members to free themselves from the baggage of non-canonical importations (including prayers to angels with non-biblical names, promise to remain silent, administering sacraments at a distance, exorcism inconsistent with the ritual)?

It can't be said that it was easy. Members were prepared, however, because loyalty and obedience to church authority were clearly emphasized from the beginning. It has been part of the spirituality of Opus Angelorum from the beginning.

However, not all OA groups obeyed these recommendations. What



■ Guardian Angel, icon by Vivian Imbruglia, USA

attitude should be taken towards them?

The only correct attitude is obedience. Those who do not keep this attitude do not act in accordance with the true spirit of Opus Angelorum. Obedience, of course, does not exclude the possibility that further theological research will show that some aspects present in the writings of Mother Gabriele, which have not yet been recognized as contained in Scripture and Tradition, are still there.

How does Opus Angelorum work with church institutions to preserve the canonical nature of their devotion: delegate from the Holy See, theological commission, Church assistant? Is there such a need?

Application of the decree of 1992 took place under the direction and supervision of the delegate of the Holy See, who received special powers of attorney in this matter. Thanks to his efforts on May 31, 2000, the Congregation for the Doctrine of

the Faith approved the act of consecration to holy angels and guardian angels. On November 7, 2008, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life issued a rescript approving the statutes of *Opus Angelorum*. The delegate of the Holy See, Father Dr Daniel Ols OP, cooperates with the leadership of the Order of the Cross, as well as the theological commission on the approval of prayers and meditations from the writings of Mother Gabriele.

Most Catholics have limited knowledge about the angels. It usually ends up in the prayer "Angel of God, my guardian dear..." So what are you doing to promote angelic spirituality?

After approving the statute, *Opus Angelorum* received a mission in the Church to revive the devotion to the holy angels not only by spreading prayers to the holy angels, but also through the effort of developing this devotion to the full dimension that is expressed in the authentic life of consecration to the holy angels. Similar acts of consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary are known in the history of the Church.

What spiritual fruit can bring a deeper commitment to the devotion to the angels?

The angels' help and unity with them allows people to live their faith better and testify to it more strongly and convincingly. The holy angels look at God's face and adore Him constantly (cf. Mt 18:10). Therefore, they can enlighten believers who are

consciously open to their actions. The angels help us to meditate on the divine secrets thanks to which we grow in the knowledge and love of God. They also help us live in His presence, leading to the loving adoration of God for His glory.

What can we and should we learn from the holy angels?

Many things, but especially to give GOD the absolute first place in our lives, to truly love Him and serve Him with great, holy reverence and unconditional obedience.

What would you like to say to readers of "The Angels" magazine?

I would like to recall the words of Pope Pius XII shortly before his departure: 'Wake up and sharpen your senses to the invisible world that surrounds you - "Visible things are transitory, but invisible things eternal" (2 Cor 4:18). Cultivate trusting communion with the holy angels who persistently care about your rescue and holiness! May God let you spend a blessed eternity with them. Therefore, start to meet them now.' I would also like to encourage you to use the angelic prayer books and booklet with a great selection of prayers, litanies, novenas, meditations and songs about angels. Maybe you would like to attend the angelic retreats or pilgrimages. If you are interested in *Opus Angelorum* spirituality I invite you to visit our website www.opusangelorum.org. God bless you. I wish you lots of joy in your life with the holy angels.

Fr **Piotr Prusakiewicz** CSMA and **Karol Wojteczek** were speaking to Fr **Bonifatius Markert** ORC

Heavenly angelic intervention

I would like to thank my wonderful guardian angel for his particular protection. I know that he looks after me always, but this time his intervention was almost tangible.

It was on Sunday, three weeks before my first religious vows. I was praying in the chapel when a thought came to me to make the Stations of the Cross. Engrossed in prayer I decided to venerate the Cross. By the fourth station I remembered that I had promised a sister to open the sacristy door. "Well, okay, I will do it when I finish," I thought, and returned to praying. Unfortunately, my focus faded away. An inner voice told me to leave the chapel. I decided to go, considering it was better than praying any old how. I got up from my knees, went out and closed the door.

A moment later I heard a loud crash inside the chapel. I opened the door again. I could hardly see - the dust was everywhere!

A huge piece of plaster had come off the ceiling and fallen down just by the fourth station where I had knelt a few minutes earlier. The force of the impact was so great that the bench just cracked. Pieces of ceiling were scattered inside the chapel.

When the sisters found out what happened, they said, "Well, lady, you've got a very good guardian angel."

Yes, I know that. Thank you, my guardian angel.

Sr **Maria Jolanta Fałat** CSSE, Poland

An angel as a lifesaver



Richard Bell, www.unsplash.com

We don't know what God intends for us, but the smallest reflection allows us to conclude that someone is subtly protecting us against the dangers of life.

I experienced this personally some years ago. It can even be said that I saw my guardian angel, although any details of his appearance have been completely deleted from my memory.

This took place in Władysławowo in Poland, in early August, 1994. I initially did not treat the happening as an encounter with an unearthly being. I saw it as fate – no more. I was at the seaside with my wife and then small children. I decided to go for one more dip, though the sea was quite cold and the waves were high. But it was the last day of our holiday, so I felt a great need for a swim in the sea. At that time I did not even swim much. I only approached the first wave, I jumped in and allowed it to carry me to the shore.

At a certain moment I thought, 'That's my last jump: it's getting cold,' and I jumped onto the wave. It turned out that the ocean current had changed in the meantime, and, instead of taking me towards the shore, it carried me further into the ocean. Seeing this, I did not even panic. I tried to break through, but was already too cold and tired. I thought, 'What should I do? If I start waving towards the beach, they'll think that's all I'm doing, simply waving, and if I shout, they won't hear me.' I then just lay down on the water to rest and try again in a moment. That was a mistake, as the sea then carried me even further... I could no longer clearly make out the people on the beach.

I was then pulled down several times under the water. My arms were sore and I thought to myself, 'There is no point struggling, as the beach has no lifeguards anyway.' What then could I do? It behoved me to slowly make my farewell to life. I was then 31 years old and had just started work as a catechist. The thought occurred to me, 'I wonder what life is like on the other side... in two or three minutes, I will find out.' Floating on my back, I made an examination of conscience. Lying peacefully on the water, I thought, 'If it pulls me under once again, I'll struggle no more. After all, no one on shore knows that I am drowning.' And one more thought penetrated my consciousness, 'Lord God, if

You need me, then You will save me.' This gave me a new kind of strength to try once more to get over this wave. I turned around to swim normally. I looked up and saw a young man drawing close to me and I thought to myself, 'Here's another person who wants to swim in the cold sea.' He swam up to me and asked, "Can I help you?" Astonished, I answered, "I'll manage." I remember that he gave a slight smile and answered, "I'll help you." I took hold of him and by our united efforts we swam towards the shore, which took a surprisingly short time.

We got to shore, where a rescue attempt was being prepared. Some lifeguards, secured by a rope, entered the water and a crowd was looking on. Seeing this, I thought, 'How embarrassing!' I stepped onto the beach, my head bowed in shame. I vomited the sea water which I had earlier managed to swallow. Someone handed me a flask with hot coffee. Some two or three minutes later, I came to and got up to thank my rescuer, but couldn't see him anywhere.

My wife told me that she had earlier wanted to thank him and just took a quick look to see if I was all right, but also couldn't find him. This was odd, as she had seen him calmly undress before entering the water (although his clothes were no longer where they had been left), but she did not see him dry himself or dress. How could he have done so in a moment?

At first, however we accounted for this by saying that it could have been a lifeguard who had come from some resort. My wife told me later how events had appeared

from her perspective. She had felt that something bad was happening as I had never swum out quite so far. She persuaded our friend to go for help to the next beach, which did have lifeguards on duty. Before they arrived and, feeling increasingly powerless, she had prayed. It was at that moment that a young man came onto the beach. Nobody asked him for help, but he got undressed, and without giving himself time to acclimatise, he entered the extremely cold water and swam directly in my direction. How had he found out that I needed help, as he himself had said nothing and our friend had only just left to seek help, not telling anyone else on the way?

It was only a long time later, once my wife and I had calmly gone over all the facts that it suddenly struck us: what if it had been the extraordinary assistance of an angel? We obviously cannot have absolute proof of this, but we have a strong conviction that this was the case. The most convincing fact is that he appeared beside me at the exact moment when my wife had asked God for help. Also his otherworldly calm. He did not allow himself to be misled by my irrational assurance that I could cope...

Angels are truly among us and come to our aid. It is worth our while to open ourselves to them and to make use of their help.

Grzegorz Fels

Taken from his book "Believe in an angel. Almost everything about the Divine messengers" (Publishing House Rafael, Kraków, 2012).



Novena prayer for healing

Lord Jesus Christ, while on earth you bent down to every human suffering. We implore you through the intercession of Blessed Bronislaw Markiewicz for a miracle of healing for N...

If it is Your will, O God, let him/her return to good health and praise you joyfully for the grace received through the intercession of your servant Blessed Bronislaw Markiewicz. We make this prayer through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of Blessed Bronislaw Markiewicz

Lord Jesus Christ, concealed in the Most Blessed Sacrament, I beg you through the love which you have for your Most Holy Mother, to magnify my faith, hope and love.

Give me the spirit of true repentance. Grant me everything for which the Most Holy Virgin asks for me, who live and reign with God the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

Angels in the history of the early Church

Were angels present in the history of the early Church when Christ's disciples continued His work of salvation?

■ The Feast of Ascension, fresco by Gebhard Fugel in the St John the Baptist's Catholic Church in Obereschach, Stadt Ravensburg, 1893/1894



The answer to the question is “Yes”. Just as the angels accompanied Jesus in His earthly mission, they were also at the side of His apostles. The Acts of the Apostles are full of stories of angelic interventions. Let us reflect on them.

Angel with a starting pistol

Angels make themselves known at the very beginning of the Church's history. St Luke writes that after the Lord's Ascension, when the apostles stood staring helplessly up at the sky, they were approached by “two men in white” (Acts 1:10). They asked the apostles, somewhat rhetorically, why they were looking up at the sky

and assured them that Jesus, whom they had seen, would return in the same way. The angels' role, therefore, was to allow the apostles to remain where they were and to give them hope, confirming or reminding them of the promise made to them by Jesus himself. The intervention of the angels, as it were, sets them on their way to take up the mission their Master has set them.

It is worth noting that the angel at the beginning of the Gospel when he revealed himself to Joseph, encouraging him to take an active part in the work of salvation by taking Mary home as his wife, played a very similar role as at the Ascension. It is not without significance that the angels are here described in the same way as in the scene of the women

by the empty tomb. These two happenings at the very beginning of the history of the Church provide us with a key to our understanding. The Church, in a sense, repeats the story of Jesus – from the Annunciation to the Resurrection.

Apostles like angels?

The angels are summoned again in the sixth and seventh chapters of Acts, during the trial of Stephen which would end in his martyrdom. Stephen, speaking before the Sanhedrin, summarises biblical history in order to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is its culmination and

fulfilment. In his speech, the martyr devotes particular attention to Moses at the very point at which he refers - three times - to the angels. Firstly, according to Stephen, it was actually with an angel (as a Divine messenger) with whom Moses spoke in the burning bush. Secondly, this angel took care of Moses, when he fulfilled his difficult and thankless mission as leader and saviour of his people. Thirdly, it was from an angel or, to put it better, through his mediation, that Moses received the “word of life” on Mount Sinai, that is, the Law, the Torah – the basis of the faith of Israel and its relationship with God. In summing up, Stephen sharply reminds his listeners, that they murdered the “Upright One” (Jesus) sent by God as the fulfilment of the Law, although they themselves had been given the Law through angels (Acts 7:52-53).

In this teaching by Stephen, the angels not only confirm the mission of Moses, but their presence and authority to serve, above all, to emphasise the importance of the Divine message. Finally, Stephen’s opponents see the likeness to an angel in his face. (Acts 6:15). This comment by the author of Acts indicates very clearly that Stephen, speaking in the name of Jesus is himself a messenger of God and his teaching constitutes part of the Law of the New Covenant, which we are not allowed to reject.

God’s plan before human plans

We next meet an angel who in chapter 10 of Acts appears to the

centurion Cornelius, asking him to bring St Peter to his home. Peter will shortly afterwards baptise Cornelius and his household, bringing the first pagans into the Church and introducing a New People of God, who, despite initial opposition, makes the salvation brought by Jesus Christ open to all. This is yet another example of an angel being the one who serves the fulfilment of God’s plan, despite human misgivings and opposition.

Two chapters later, it is none other than an angel who leads Peter out from prison, where he had been sent by Herod Agrippa. Tapping him on his side, he woke him and hastened him on his way and next led him out of the locked prison, opening the gates before him. It is interesting that Peter remains unsure whether all this is happening in reality or in a dream. It is only when the angel leaves him, a few streets from the prison, that the apostle is aware that he has witnessed an angelic intervention. This is also an important clue for us. It is frequently the case that we become aware of Divine intervention only after the fact. If then today, it seems to you that things are going badly in your life, and that God is doing nothing, then be patient and wait. It is possible that you will discover that these particular difficult moments were the time of His particular intervention.

At the end of chapter twelve, the angel of the Lord strikes down and kills King Herod Agrippa who himself wanted to be worshipped as a god (Acts 12:23). It is not only a matter of the angel as executor of God’s just punishment on a tyrannical and villainous ruler, but that the Word of God has once again

shown itself stronger than all obstacles put in its way by men, however powerful. That, in Luke’s mind is the main theme and message of the book – the unbounded power of the Word of God, which spreads throughout the world.

Accept God’s promise

Angels are also mentioned during St Paul’s trial before the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:1-10). During the first hearing Paul quite adroitly makes use of the difference of opinion between the Pharisees, who believe in the existence of angels, spirits and the possibility of the Resurrection, and the Sadducees, who wholly reject such a belief. Both parties almost literally tear each other to pieces and Paul is hauled out of the court.

Once again, it is not only a matter of Paul cunningly setting his enemies against one another, but the happening has a deeper meaning. The biblical author demonstrated two very important matters. Firstly, the Gospel of the Risen Christ, proclaimed by the apostles and their successors, is the fulfilment of the Divine promise, to which we cannot be indifferent. Secondly, that this promise and its fulfilment must be accepted in their entirety. This implies the necessity of believing in that which is invisible and imperceptible to the human senses. Both these questions are exceedingly important in our attitude to the Church and how we experience our lives as part of it.

Fr **Michał Lubowicki**

Deliver us from evil

Pope Paul VI, General Audience, Wednesday, November 15, 1972

What are the major needs of the Church today?

Do not be surprised by our simplistic, or even superstitious and unreal answer: one of the greatest needs is the defence against that evil, which we call the Devil.

Before clarifying our thinking, we invite you to open yourself in the light of faith on the vision of human life, a vision that extends immensely from this observatory and penetrates into singular depths. And, indeed, the picture we are invited to contemplate with global realism is very beautiful. It is the picture of creation, the work of God, that God himself, as an exterior mirror of his wisdom and power, admired in his substantial beauty (Cf. Gen. 1, 10).

Then the picture of the dramatic history of humanity is very interesting, from which story emerges that of redemption, that of Christ, of our salvation, with its stupendous treasures of revelation, of prophecy, of sanctity, of high life on a supernatural level, of eternal promises (Cf. Eph. 1, 10). To know how to look at this picture one cannot but be enchanted: everything has a meaning, everything has an end, everything has an order, and everything reveals a Presence-Transcendence, a thought, a life, and finally a love, so that the universe, for what it is and for what it is not, presents itself to us as an exciting and intoxicating preparation for something even more beautiful

and even more perfect (Cf. 1 Cor. 2, 9; 13, 12; Rom. 8, 19-23).

The Christian vision of the cosmos and of life is therefore triumphantly optimistic; and this vision justifies our joy and our gratitude to live so that by celebrating the glory of God we sing our happiness (Cf. the Glory of the Mass).

The Biblical teaching

But is this vision complete? Is it correct? Do we care about the deficiencies in the world? The dysfunctions of things compared to our existence? Pain, death? Wickedness, cruelty, sin, in a word, evil? And don't we see how bad it is in the world? Especially, how much moral evil, that is simultaneously, though differently, against man and against God? Is this not a sad spectacle, an inexplicable mystery? And are we not, the very experts of the Word, the singers of Good, we believers, the most sensitive, the most disturbed by observation and the experience of evil? We find it in the realm of nature, where so many of its manifestations seem to denounce a disorder. Then we find it in the human sphere, where we encounter weakness, fragility, pain, death, and something worse (Rom. 7); already the pagan poet had denounced this

inner conflict in the very heart of man: *video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor* (OVIDIO, Met. 7, 19). We find sin, the perversion of human freedom, and the profound cause of death, because it is a source of life detachment from God (Rom. 5, 12), and then, in turn, an occasion and effect of an intervention in us and in our world of a dark and enemy agent, the Devil. Evil is no longer just a deficiency, but an efficiency, a living, spiritual, perverted and perverted being. Terrible reality. Mysterious and fearful.

Those who refuse to recognize it as existing come from the framework of biblical and ecclesiastical teaching; or whoever makes it a principle in itself, not having it as well, like every creature, originated from God; or it explains it as a pseudo-reality, a conceptual and fantastic personification of the unknown causes of our ailments. The problem of evil, seen in its complexity, and in its absurdity compared to our one-sided rationality, becomes haunting. It constitutes the strongest difficulty for our religious intelligence of the cosmos. Not for nothing did St Augustine suffer for years: *Quaerebam unde malum, et non erat exitus*: I was looking for where evil came from, and I could not find an explanation (S. Aug. Confess. VII, 5, 7, 11, etc.; PL, 32, 736, 739).

And so here is the importance that the warning of evil assumes for our



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■ Pope Paul VI

correct Christian conception of the world, of life, of salvation. First in the development of evangelical history at the beginning of his public life: who does not remember the page full of meanings of the triple temptation of Christ? Then in the many evangelical episodes, in which the Devil crosses the Lord's steps and appears in his teachings? (Cf. Mat. 12, 43) And, how can we forget that Christ, three times referring to the Devil, as his adversary, qualifies him as "prince of this world"? (Io. 12, 31; 14, 30; 16, 11) And the task of this nefarious presence is reported in many passages of the New Testament. St Paul calls him the "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4, 4), and warns us about the struggle in the dark, which we Christians must support not with a single Devil, but with a fearful plurality: "Put on", says the Apostle, "the armour of God to be able to face the pitfalls of the devil, for our struggle is not (only) with blood and flesh, but against the principalities and powers, against the rulers of

darkness, against the evil spirits of the air" (Eph. 6: 11 -12).

And that it is not a question of just one demon, but of many, different evangelical passages indicate it to us (Luke 11, 21; Mark 5, 9); but one is principal: Satan, which means the adversary, the enemy; and with him many, all creatures of God, but fallen, because rebellious and damned; all a mysterious world, upset by an unhappy drama, of which we know very little.

The hidden enemy that seeds errors

However, we know many things about this diabolical world, which concern our life and all of human history. The Devil is at the origin of humanity's first misfortune; he was the devious and fatal tempter of the first sin, original sin (Gen. 3; Sap. 1, 24). From that fall of Adam the Devil acquired a certain empire over man,

from which only the Redemption of Christ can free us. It is a story that still lasts: we remember the exorcisms of baptism and the frequent references of sacred scripture and the liturgy to the aggressive and oppressive "power of darkness" (Cf. Luke 22, 53; Col. 1, 13). He is the number one enemy, he is the tempter par excellence. Thus we know that this dark and disturbing being really exists, and that with treacherous cunning it still acts; it is the occult enemy who sows errors and misfortunes in human history. To remember the revealing gospel parable of the good wheat and of the tares (weeds), synthesis and explanation of the illogic that seems to preside over our contrasting vicissitudes: inimicus homo hoc fecit (Mat. 13, 28). It is "the murderer from the beginning. . . and father of lies", as Christ defines it (Cf. Io. 8, 44-45); he is the sophist of the moral equilibrium of man. He is the perfidious and astute charmer, who in us knows how to insinuate himself, by way of the senses,

of fantasy, concupiscence, utopian logic, or disordered social contacts in the game of our work, to introduce deviations, just as harmful as to appearance conform to our physical or psychic structures, or to our instinctive, profound aspirations.

It would be this on the Devil and on the influence he can exert on individuals, as on communities, on entire societies, or on events, a very important chapter of the Catholic doctrine to be rediscovered, while today it is little. It is thought by some to find sufficient compensation in psycho-analytical and psychiatric studies or in spiritual experiences, today unfortunately so widespread in some countries. There are fears of falling back into old Manichean theories, or into fearful fantastic and superstitious digressions. Today we prefer to show ourselves to be strong and unscrupulous, posing as positivists, except then to believe in so many gratuitous magical or popular obediences, or worse, to open our own soul - our own baptized soul, visited so many times by the Eucharistic presence and inhabited by the Holy Spirit! - to the licentious experiences of the senses, to the deleterious drugs, as well as to the ideological seductions of fashion errors, these cracks through which the Devil can easily penetrate and alter the human mentality. It is not said that every sin is directly due to diabolical action (Cf. S. TH. 1, 104, 3); but it is also true that those who do not watch over themselves with a certain moral rigor (Cf. Mat. 12, 45; Eph. 6, 11) is exposed to the influence of the mysterium iniquitatis, to which St Paul refers (2 Thess. 2, 3-12), and which makes the alternative of our salvation problematic.

Our doctrine becomes uncertain, obscured as it is by the darkness itself that surrounds the Devil. But our curiosity, excited by the certainty of its manifold existence, becomes legitimate with two questions. Are there signs, and which, of the presence of the diabolical action? And what are the means of defence against such insidious danger?

Presence of the action of maligno

The answer to the first question requires a great deal of caution, even if the signs of the Evil One sometimes seem to become evident. We can suppose its sinister action where the negation of God becomes radical, subtle and absurd, where the lie affirms itself hypocritical and powerful, against the evident truth, where love is extinguished by a cold and cruel selfishness, where the name of Christ is contested with conscious and rebellious hatred (Cf. 1 Cor. 16, 22; 12, 3), where the spirit of the Gospel is mystified and denied, where despair is affirmed as the last word, etc. But it is too wide and difficult a diagnosis, which we do not dare to deepen and authenticate now, but it does not deprive everyone of dramatic interest, to which even modern literature has dedicated famous pages (See for example the works of Bernanos, studied by CH MOELLER, *Littér. Du XXe siècle*, I, pp. 397 ff., P. MACCHI, *The face of evil in Bernanos*, see then Satan, *Etudes Carmélitaines*, Desclée de Br. 1948). The problem of evil remains one of the greatest and permanent problems for the human spirit, even after the victorious response

that Jesus Christ gives you. "We know," writes the Evangelist St John, "that we are (born) from God, and that the whole world is placed under the evil one" (1 Io. 5, 19).

The Christian defence

To the other question: which defence, what remedy to oppose the action of the Devil? The answer is easier to formulate, even if it remains difficult to be implemented. We could say: all that defends us from sin shelters us for the same reason from the invisible enemy. Grace is the decisive defence. Innocence takes on the aspect of fortitude. And then everyone remembers how the apostolic pedagogy symbolized in the armour of a soldier, the virtues that can make the Christian invulnerable (Cf. Rom. 13, 1 2; Eph. 6, 11, 14, 17; 1 Thess. 5; 8). The Christian must be militant; must be vigilant and strong (1 Petr. 5, 8); and must sometimes resort to some special ascetic exercise to ward off certain diabolical incursions; Jesus teaches this by indicating the remedy "in prayer and fasting" (Mark 9, 29). And the Apostle suggests the main line to keep: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil in good" (Rom. 12, 21; Mat. 13, 29).

With the awareness therefore of the present adversities in which the souls, the Church, the world find themselves today we will try to give meaning and effectiveness to the usual invocation of our principal prayer: "Our Father. . . deliver us from evil!"

May our Apostolic Blessing also benefit so much.

God has given his angels orders about you

You who live in the secret place of Elyon,
spend your nights in the shelter of Shaddai,
saying to the Lord, 'My refuge,
my fortress, my God in whom I trust!'

He rescues you from the snare
of the fowler set on destruction;
he covers you with his pinions,
you find shelter under his wings.
His constancy is shield and protection.
You need not fear the terrors of night,
the arrow that flies in the daytime,
the plague that stalks in the darkness,
the scourge that wreaks havoc at high noon.

Though a thousand fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
you yourself will remain unscathed.
You have only to keep your eyes
open to see how the wicked are repaid,
you who say, 'to the Lord, my refuge!'
and make Elyon your fortress.

No disaster can overtake you,
no plague come near your tent;
he has given his angels orders
about you to guard you wherever you go.
They will carry you in their arms
in case you trip over a stone.

You will walk upon wild beast and adder,
you will trample young lions and snakes.
Since he clings to me I rescue him,
I raise him high, since he acknowledges my name.
He calls to me and I answer him:
in distress I am at his side,
I rescue him and bring him honour.
I shall satisfy him with long life,
and grant him to see my salvation.'

Only close the door behind you

The Bible continually astonishes me. I was recently struck by the thought of the closed door of which Jesus speaks in Matthew's Gospel. In his teaching on prayer, Jesus suggests that we go into our own room, close the door and pray to the Father (Matthew 6:6).

I never previously gave any thought to the notion of a closed door, but, as will soon be made clear, this is not the only moment when God instructs people to close a door behind them. It is an instruction which, as is usually the case, turns out to have a spiritual dimension.

Noah

We first meet the idea of a closed door in the Book of Genesis as we read the story of Noah and the great flood which was to wipe out humanity and all living things. Once Noah had gathered together all the animals, the Biblical text says: "Then the Lord shut him in" (Genesis 7:16). This short statement has very serious consequences. It is God Himself who ultimately sets His seal on the work of saving the goodness and life in the world. Noah, enclosed as in a nutshell, can feel safe, as God closed the door beyond which lies death and devastation. The just were saved by God by means of being separated from the evil which had flooded the world. The doors of the ark remained closed up until the moment when God pushes back the flood waters and out of it there emerges a "new creation". The

symbolism of the closed doors is used to summarise the history of mankind up until that moment, which, through its sin, allowed misfortune and death entry into the world. Once the doors of the ark are opened, the whole story acquires a new freshness and God makes a new covenant with Noah.

Ezekiel

The prophet Ezekiel experiences the power of the closed door in a similar way. In his book, we read that the hand of God rested on him and that the Spirit set him on his feet and instructed the prophet to remain in his house (cf. Ezekiel 3:24). It was an order from God who did not wish to speak further to the contrary and perverse people. The prophet's admonitions did not touch the hearts of the Israelites. Upon God's recommendation Ezekiel becomes dumb and shuts himself off from the world. The closed doors behind which he hides, become a kind of wall, dividing God from the Chosen People. Now God speaks to the prophet only behind closed doors, telling him the truth of the tragic future of Jerusalem and time of slavery. The closed doors allow for God to pass on the word addressed to the people. At the same time, they become

a reproach of conscience for those who have cut themselves off from the Word of God and from His presence.

Elisha

The prophet Elisha also closes the door behind him when he goes to the dead boy and there prays for him to be returned to life (2 Kings 4:33). His prophetic actions are not of the kind to be carried out in public. They are not for everyone. God performs miracles in secret and the boy is brought back to life and given back to his mother. Once more, closed doors become the image of the secret and invisible actions of God in the life of a human being. God hides Himself away from people in order to be able to carry out the great deeds which a human being experiences and which he must accept with faith, as not every miracle is perceptible to the eye. We see only that which God wishes us to see. We perceive Him only when, by means of His actions, He comes out of hiding and opens the doors to us.

Moses

Moving to the time of Moses and slavery in Egypt, we find Moses'



instruction to take the lamb during the first Passover and sprinkle the lintel above the door with the blood and to close the door and not venture out until morning (Exodus 12:22). Here the closed doors are also a protection against the anger which God directs against Egypt. The doors which have been sprinkled with blood form an impregnable barrier against the death which is reaping a harvest among the first-born sons of Egypt. Whosoever has closed their door and, having faith, has sprinkled their door with the blood of the lamb, can feel safe and be saved. God only allows the doors to be opened at dawn. This naturally leads us to think of the

Resurrection, when the stone doors of Jesus' grave are opened and the light of the rising sun penetrates the space. Doors have yet again become the gates of grace through which God comes to man.

Jesus' door

The theme of closed doors also occurs frequently in the New Testament. Jesus himself teaches us that belonging to the Kingdom of God entails attempting to enter through the narrow door (Luke 13:24). In the parables He then warns us that the day will come when the Master of the house will get up and lock the door when those

outside will begin to call and knock and He will reply that He does not know them (Luke 13:25). The image of Jesus standing at the door is also a sign of waiting for a human reaction. There are those who knock at the door too late and even some to whom Jesus does not wish to open. Both kinds of people make bad use of the time and opportunity which God offers them. Closed doors, which were to be a symbol of an encounter with God and an image of constant readiness eventually become the cause of their undoing.

It is also worth our while considering the closed doors behind which the apostles shut themselves away after the Resurrection. The evangelist mentions that Jesus came to them, despite the fact that they remained closed (John 20:26). This is an incredibly consoling tale. Locked doors are no obstacle to the Risen Christ. Even if we sometimes close them to others, we can never manage to close them to God. Whether we want to or not, God continues to act, even behind closed doors. He is present and is capable of opening that which people have shut and locked up out of fear.

Contemplating the above passages, we might ask ourselves whether we open or close the doors to our own souls to God. God speaks only in secret, behind closed doors, but He also stands by these doors and knocks, until we finally open them. In conclusion we should remind ourselves of the words of St John Paul II to "welcome Christ and accept his power. Help the Pope and all those who wish to serve Christ and with Christ's power serve the human person and the whole of mankind. Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ".

Fr **Mateusz Szerszeń** CSMA

Teach me, St Joseph!

Saint Joseph can help us to live to live fruitful lives. The whole Church recognizes St Joseph as a patron and guardian.

For centuries many different features of his life have caught the attention of believers. He was a man ever faithful to the mission God gave him. St Joseph often slips under the radar because of his quiet demeanor and hidden life. However, he has much to teach us about growing in holiness.

Let us quietly meditate upon five extraordinary virtues of this greatest of all saints.

Silence. Not once in the Bible do we hear a word from the great St Joseph. This silence of St Joseph is very eloquent. It teaches us a fundamental attitude to enter into deep prayer: silence. If we are constantly bombarded by noises then it is impossible to hear the Word of God, the Holy Spirit that speaks to us in the gentle breeze of silence. Also, the silence of St Joseph teaches us the importance of example. We must prove our authenticity by words, but also by our actions. St Joseph taught the world by the holy way that he lived. Let him be an example for us.

Prayer. St Joseph was a man of prayer. What an extraordinary role he played in the history of salvation. He was both the spouse of Mary, the Mother of God, as well as the foster-father of Jesus, the Son of the living God. St Joseph actually taught Jesus to speak and to address God



■ Gerrit van Honthorst, *Childhood of Christ*, c.1620

as “Abba”— meaning “Daddy”. In a certain sense St Joseph taught Jesus to use the human words to talk to the Heavenly Father — this is prayer. Therefore, if St Joseph taught Jesus how to pray, how much could he teach me how to pray if I simply ask for his help? Start now: St Joseph, teach me how to pray!

Courage and Manliness. In a society where too many men shirk their obligations toward their wives, children and family and turn to vices and the easy life when confronted with difficulties, St Joseph shines as a model of courage and fortitude. He travelled the many miles in the cold and wind, only to meet rejection. He found refuge in an animal shelter for the birth of Jesus. He arose early to flee into Egypt saving the Child Jesus from the vicious and murderous threats of King Herod. Faced with

so many difficulties, St Joseph stood tall and confronted the obstacles with manly courage. May the men of the present generation lift up their gaze to the gentle but courageous man of God — good St Joseph.

Provide and Protect. St Joseph both protected and provided for the Holy Family. He was a hard worker — exercising the trade of a carpenter. He earned his living by the sweat of his brow. He thought not of himself but of how he could best provide for and protect the family that God had entrusted to his care. As we draw close to Christmas let us beg good St Joseph to provide for and to protect our spiritual lives. Materialism, consumerism, hedonism are the gods of the present culture. These actually suffocate spirituality. St Joseph’s prayers can help us to look beyond the buying, having, and possessing. He can help us

to realize that true joy and happiness does not come from having things, but in possessing God. To hold the Child Jesus in our arms and in our hearts is worth more than all of the money and possessions of the entire world. St Joseph can teach us this simple but profound lesson!

St Joseph, Our Lady and Jesus.

To arrive at a true and authentic devotion to Mary, good St Joseph can serve as a powerful bridge. Aside from Jesus Himself, nobody on earth knew, understood, cherished and loved the Blessed Virgin Mary more than St Joseph. Turn to good St Joseph and beg him for the grace of greater knowledge and love for Mary, his beloved spouse. Your devotion to Mary will greatly increase as a result! Then turn to St Joseph and beg him for the grace of intimate knowledge of Jesus, that you will love Jesus more ardently and follow Jesus more closely. Aside from Mary nobody knew Jesus better on earth than good St Joseph. The Holy Family is complete only when the three members are recognized, honoured and loved. May the prayers of good St Joseph open your hearts to the immense treasures that God has in store for you this Advent Season. Then may Jesus be born in the depths of your heart this Christmas day!

St Joseph's stairs in Santa Fe

It was in the year 1610 that the Spanish founded a town that is now known as Santa Fe, the capital of the state of New Mexico. Santa Fe was originally called the Royal City of the Holy Faith of St Francis of Assisi or, as it was named in Spanish, La Villa

Real de la Santa Fe de San Francisco de Assisi. It was occupied by Indians, Mexicans and Spanish and was under Spanish control until a war which placed this area under the rule of the New Republic of Mexico for 25 years.

Later, as a result of the US victory in the Mexican war, this southwest area was ceded to the United States in 1848. Following the war we find the city of Santa Fe having a multiplicity of cultures. Native American Indian, Spanish, Mexican and Anglo cultures provide a rich, varied and very colourful heritage.

Architects confounded

At the end of the Old Santa Fe Trail stands the Loretto Chapel. Inside the Gothic structure is the staircase referred to as 'miraculous', 'inexplicable', 'marvellous' and it is sometimes called St Joseph's Staircase. The stairway confounds architects, engineers and master craftsmen. It makes over two complete 360 degree turns, stands 20 feet tall and has no centre support. It rests solely on its base and against the choir loft. The risers of the 33 steps are all of the same height. Made of an apparently extinct wood species, it was constructed with only square wooden pegs without glue or nails.

The history of the Loretto Chapel began when Bishop Jean Baptiste Lamy was appointed by the Church to the New Mexico Territory in 1850. Bishop Lamy, seeking to spread the faith and bring an educational system to this new territory, began a letter-writing plea for priests, brothers and nuns to preach and teach. In one of his letters he is said to have written, "I have 6000

Catholics and 300 Americans." The first acceptance of his general plea was from the Sisters of Loretto.

In 1852 the Sisters of Loretto responded to Lamy's pleas by sending seven sisters who agreed to make this arduous journey to Santa Fe. Their trek was through St Louis, then up the river to Independence, Montana. This small group was beset by a cholera epidemic: the Mother Superior died, and another nun was too ill to continue the journey and returned to Kentucky. An additional story continues that they travelled by wagon through bad weather, and Indian country.

The sisters arrived in Santa Fe in 1852 and opened the Academy of Our Lady of Light (Loretto) in 1853. Despite the challenges of the territory - smallpox, tuberculosis, leaky mud roofs and even a brush with the rowdy Confederate Texans during the Civil War - the school was started in 1853 and grew from very small beginnings to a school of around 300 students.

The campus covered a square block with 10 buildings. With the help of tuition fees for the girls schooling, donations and the sisters own inheritances from their families, they built their school and chapel.

When it was decided that the school needed a chapel, property was purchased and in 1873 work began on the Loretto Chapel.

Jean Baptiste Lamy brought architect Antoine Mouly and his son, Projectus Mouly, from Paris, France to Santa Fe to be the builders for what is now St Francis Cathedral.

It took ten years to build. During the first period of construction, and as an apparent afterthought, Archbishop Lamy advised and encouraged the sisters to utilize the father and son team to design and build their dream

chapel after King Louis IX's Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, France. It was the favourite chapel of the archbishop from his early days in Paris, and the older Mouly had been involved in the renovation of Sainte Chapelle, in the early 1800s.

It is reported that the sisters pooled their own inheritances to raise the \$30,000 required to build this beautiful Revival-style Gothic chapel: a striking contrast to the adobe churches already in the area.

Stone for the chapel was quarried from locations around Santa Fe including Cerro Colorado, about 20 miles from Santa Fe near the town of Lamy. The sandstone for the walls and the porous volcanic stone used for the ceiling were hauled to town by wagon.

The ornate stained glass in the Loretto Chapel also made part of its journey to Santa Fe via wagon. Purchased in 1876 from the DuBois Studio in Paris, the glass was first sent from Paris to New Orleans by sailing ship and then by paddle boat to St Louis, Montana, where it was taken by covered wagon over the Old Santa Fe Trail to the chapel.

The chapel was completed in 1878 and has since seen many additions and renovations such as, the introduction of the Stations of the Cross, the Gothic altar and the frescos during the 1890s.

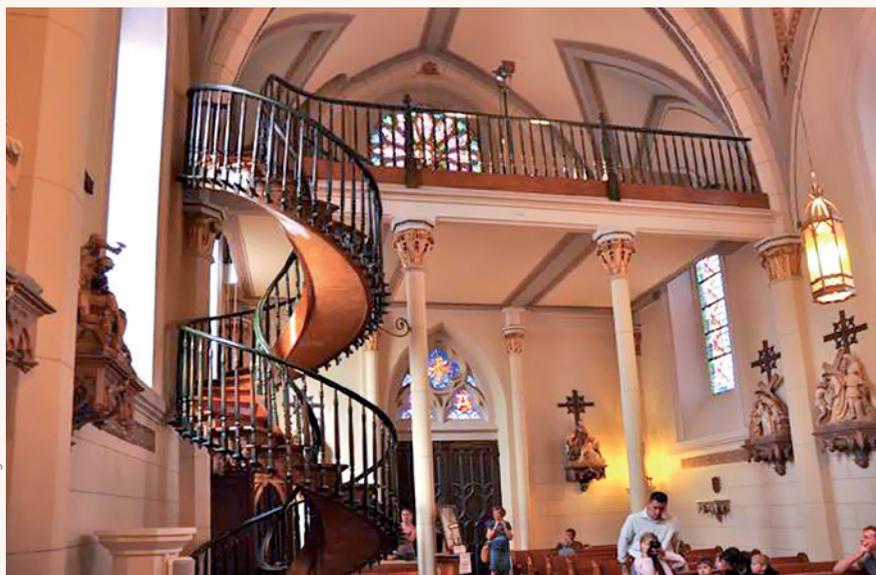
The Miraculous Staircase

Legend has it that this was constructed or inspired by St Joseph the Carpenter, and was built sometime between 1877 and 1881. It took at least six months to build, and has two 360 degree turns with no visible means of support.

The Loretto Academy was closed in 1968, and the property was put up for sale. At the time of sale in 1971, Our Lady of Light Chapel was informally deconsecrated as a Catholic chapel.

Loretto Chapel is now a private museum operated and maintained, in part, for the preservation of the Miraculous Staircase and the chapel itself.

www.lorettochapel.com



■ Staircase of St Joseph in Santa Fe, United States

The Litany of Saint Joseph

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.
God the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us.
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.
God the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.
Holy Trinity, One God, have mercy on us.

Holy Mary, pray for us.
Saint Joseph, pray for us.
Illustrious son of David, pray for us.

(After each of the following invocations the response is: 'pray for us')

Light of the patriarchs,
Spouse of the Mother of God,
Chaste guardian of the Virgin,
Foster-father of the Son of God,
Watchful defender of Christ,
Head of the Holy Family,
Joseph most just,
Joseph most chaste,
Joseph most prudent,
Joseph most valiant,
Joseph most obedient,
Joseph most faithful,
Mirror of patience,
Lover of poverty,
Model of workmen,
Glory of domestic life,
Guardian of virgins,
Pillar of families,



■ The dream of St Joseph by Antonio Ciseri, 19th c.

Solace of the afflicted,
Hope of the sick,
Patron of the dying,
Terror of demons,
Protector of Holy Church.

Lamb of God, Who takest
away the sins of the world,
spare us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, Who takest
away the sins of the world,
graciously hear us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, Who takest
away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.

V. He made him the lord
of His household,

R. And prince over all His
possessions.
Let Us Pray.

Almighty God, Who in Thine
ineffable providence didst choose
Blessed Joseph to be the spouse of
Thy most Holy Mother, grant that
as we venerate him as our protector
on earth, we may deserve to have
him as our intercessor in Heaven,
Thou Who livest and reignest for-
ever and ever.

R. Amen.

Thirty Days' Novena Prayer to Saint Joseph

Ever blessed and glorious Joseph, kind and loving father, and helpful friend of all in sorrow! You are the good father and protector of orphans, the defender of the defenceless, the patron of those in need and sorrow. Look kindly on my request. My sins have drawn down on me the just displeasure of my God, and so I am surrounded with unhappiness. To you, loving guardian of the Family of Nazareth, do I go for help and protection.

Listen, then, I beg you, with fatherly concern, to my earnest prayers, and obtain for me the favours I ask.

I ask it by the infinite mercy of the eternal Son of God, which moved Him to take our nature and to be born into this world of sorrow.

I ask it by the weariness and suffering you endured when you found no shelter at the inn of Bethlehem for the holy Virgin, nor a house where the Son of God could be born. Then, being everywhere refused, you had to allow the Queen of Heaven to give birth to the world's Redeemer in a cave.

I ask it by the loveliness and power of that sacred Name, Jesus, which you conferred on the adorable infant.

I ask it by that painful torture you felt at the prophecy of holy Simeon, which declared the Child Jesus and His holy Mother future victims of our sins and of their great love for us.

I ask it through your sorrow and pain of soul when the angel declared to you that the life of the Child Jesus was sought by His enemies. From their evil plan you had to flee with Him and His

Blessed Mother to Egypt. I ask it by all the suffering, weariness, and labours of that long and dangerous journey.

I ask it by all your care to protect the Sacred Child and His Immaculate Mother during your second journey, when you were ordered to return to your own country. I ask it by your peaceful life in Nazareth where you met with so many joys and sorrows.

I ask it by your great distress when the adorable Child was lost to you and His Mother for three days. I ask it by your joy at finding Him in the Temple, and by the comfort you found at Nazareth, while living in the company of the Child Jesus. I ask it by the wonderful submission He showed in His obedience to you.

I ask it by the perfect love and conformity you showed in accepting the Divine order to depart from this life, and from the company of Jesus and Mary. I ask it by the joy which filled your soul, when the Redeemer of the world, triumphant over death and hell, entered into the possession of His kingdom and led you into it with special honours.

I ask it through Mary's glorious Assumption, and through that endless happiness you have with her in the presence of God.

O good father! I beg you, by all your sufferings, sorrows, and joys, to hear me and obtain for me what I ask.

(make your request)

Obtain for all those who have asked my prayers everything that is useful to them in the plan of God. Finally, my dear patron and father, be with me and all who are dear to me in our last moments, that we may eternally sing the praises of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

This prayer can be said any 30 days of the year for any special intention both spiritual and material.

A little taste of heaven



Fr Peter Prusakiewicz, CSMA came to Beaverton, Oregon for the first time to give a day long retreat at Our Lady of Peace Retreat. One hundred people attended and many were moved to tears during the Eucharistic healing service followed by benediction when Father prayed over and blessed each person during this part of the retreat. Five priests, including Fr Peter heard many confessions. Three of the priests from the Maronite Monks of Jesus, Mary and Joseph graciously agreed to help as confessors.

Those attending the retreat had the opportunity to venerate the first-class relic of St Faustina and many came forward to receive the scapular of St Michael the Archangel.

At this time of global and ecclesial uncertainty many attending were visibly strengthened, encouraged by Father in the practice of the faith.

Carolyn Callaghan who helped Sr Agnes Clare, Retreat Directress organize the retreat mentioned that one of the older retreatants said it was the best retreat she had ever attended. The peace and joy were palpable all day - like a little sip of heaven.

The Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows who operate the retreat house, have invited Fr Peter back to continue this blessed and much needed ministry among the people of the Pacific Northwest. Fr Peter will be returning 26th - 29th March of 2021 to give a Divine Mercy weekend retreat.



A separate retreat on the Holy Angels led by Fr Peter will take place at St Clare's Retreat Centre, 2381 Laurel Glen Road, 95073 Soquel, California between 3rd - 5th December 2021.

For further information go to www.stmichaelthearchangel.info

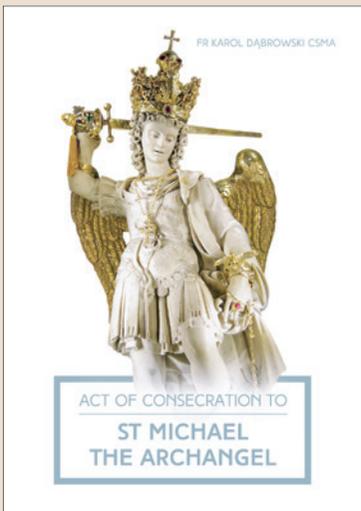


Carolyn Callaghan

Secretary to Sr Agnes Clare,
Retreat Directress

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behind such an attitude is, as she is at pains to stress, the fact that he did the will of God. He is for her the angel resplendent in his wonder and boundless humility towards the Creator. He is the angel who gazes at God with love, who learns the will of God and courageously carries it out.



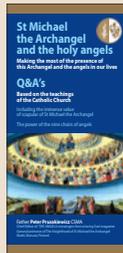
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Reliquaries from the grotto

Among the devotional items available during missions on St Michael the Archangel are white stones housed in delicate reliquaries from the cave at the Shrine in Mont Sant'Angelo, Italy. The Stone plays an integral part in the story of the revelation of St Michael in Gargano when in 1656 Bishop Alfonso entreated the help of St Michael the Archangel. He saw St Michael and was commanded to bless stones from the grotto, on which he was to inscribe the sign of the cross and the letters M.A. (Michael the Archangel).

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Scapular investiture

Rite of blessing and investiture of the Scapular of St Michael the Archangel



Any priest or deacon can conduct the ceremony of blessing and bestowing of the Scapular of St Michael the Archangel according to the following ritual.

V. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R. Who made heaven and earth.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with your spirit.

Almighty, everlasting God, who dost graciously defend thy Church from the wiles of the Devil through St Michael the Archangel, we humbly implore thee to bless + and sanctify + this scapular introduced for arousing and fostering devotion among thy faithful toward this great protector. And do thou grant that all who wear it may be strengthened by the same Holy Archangel, so as to vanquish the enemies of body and soul, both in this life and at the hour of death. Through Christ our Lord.

P. Let us pray.

Lord, look upon us praying and kindly hear the supplication of your servant dedicated to the special protection of St Michael the Archangel that through his intercession s/he may avoid any offence against you and may reach holiness in this life and after death the prize of eternal life. Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

USA 2020

21st, 22nd and 23rd April 2020

St Francis of Assisi Church

2746 E Fifth St Castle Rock, Colorado 80104

8:30 a.m. Daily Mass with homily followed by Chaplet and Talk

Contact: Sylvia Werner

Phone: +1-720-291-1441

Email: swerner@stfranciscr.org

23rd April, 2020

St Thomas More Church

8035 South Quebec Street Centennial, Colorado 80112

Phone: +1-303-770-1155

Contact: Bob Scheich

Phone: +1-303-428-3594

Email: bob.scheich@comcast.net

24th April 2020

6:30 p.m. Talk: The holy angels

Holy Trinity Church

7595 Federal Blvd., Westminster, Colorado 80030

Contact: Bob Scheich

Phone: +1-303-888-6420

Email: bob.scheich@comcast.net

25th April 2020

St Francis of Assisi Church

2746 E Fifth St Castle Rock Colorado 80104

Mini Retreat for Youth and Families

The afternoon starts with 12:30 p.m.

– Lunch and Music.

1:30 p.m. – Talk 1: St Faustina

2:00 p.m. – Angelic Chaplet and Talk 2

3:00 p.m. – Divine Mercy Chaplet,

Eucharistic Healing Hour, Confessions

5:30 p.m. Parish Mass

26th April 2020

Guest Homilist 9:30 a.m.

& 11:30 a.m.

St Francis of Assisi Church

2746 E Fifth St Castle Rock Colorado 80104

Contact: Sylvia Werner

Phone: +1 – 720 – 291 – 1441

Email: swerner@stfranciscr.org

16th – 21st September 2020

Colorado

Contact: Therese Lorentz

Email: thereselorentz@aol.com

23rd – 24th September 2020

Theme: The power and love of St Michael the Archangel of the Divine Mercy

Orange County, California

Contact: Lourdes Carroll

Phone: +1-714-624-6561

Email: IODM4life@gmail.com

25th – 27th September 2020

Holy Angels Parish Mission

St Michael Catholic Church

458 Maple Street, Livermore, CA 94550, California

Contact: Joel Bautista

Phone: +1-925-216-3213

Email: bautij01@yahoo.com

CANADA 2020

17th – 19th April 2020

Divine Mercy Parish Mission

Christ the King Parish

3674 Lake Shore Boulevard West Etobicoke, Ontario, M8W 1N6, Toronto, Canada

Contact: Fr Jozef Morawski

Phone: +1-416-251-8983

Email: office@christthekingparish.info

Website: www.christthekingparish.info

ENGLAND 2020

15th – 17th May 2020

Theme: The secrets of St Faustina Sandymount House of Prayer

16 Burbo Bank Road

Blundellsands, Crosby,

Liverpool L23 6TH

Contact: Kath Riley Co-ordinator

Phone: +44 (0)151-924-4850

Email:

sandymountcrosby@montford.org.uk

SCOTLAND 2020

24th September 2020

**7th National Divine Mercy
Conference**

9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Theme: TBC

St Augustine's Church

12, Dundyvan Road, Langloan,

Coatbridge, ML5 1DQ

Contact: Helen Boarder

Email: Helen.border@glasgow.ac.uk

IRELAND 2020

Angelic Parish Mission

The Feast of the Guardian Angels

2nd October 2020

7:30 p.m. Holy Mass

& talk on the angels

8:15 p.m. Eucharistic Healing hour

with angelic chaplet

3rd October 2020

6:00 p.m. Holy Mass

& talk St Michael, holy angels

7:00 p.m. Eucharistic Healing hour

with angelic chaplet

St Columba's Church

Long Tower, Longtower St,

Londonderry BT48 6QQ

Contact: Fr Aidan Mullan

Phone: +44 (0)287-126-1946

Email: longtower@derrydiocese.org

4th October 2020

Day Retreat

St Michael and the holy angels

Dangers of New Age.

Carmelite Fathers

Termonbacca, Southway,

Derry, BT48 9XE

Contact: Fr Stephen Quinn

Phone: +44 (0) 287-126-2512

Email: stephenbquinn_@outlook.com

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO 2021

27th – 28th February 2021

Divine Mercy Conference

Trinidad and Tobago

West Indies

Contact: Mona Rahael

Phone: +1-868-678-2636

Email: monarachael@mac.com

GIBRALTAR 2021

8th – 11th April 2021

The Triduum and

Divine Mercy Sunday

Cathedral of St Mary the Crowned

215 Main Street, Gibraltar

Contact: Rosemarie Isola

Phone: +35-057-135-000

Email:

rosemarietherese.isola@hotmail.com

USA 2021

26th – 29th March 2021

Theme: TBC

Our Lady of Peace Retreat

3600 SW 170th Avenue,

Beaverton, Oregon 97003

Contact: Carolyn Callaghan

Sr Agnes Clare, Retreat Directress

Phone: +1-503-649-7127

Email: sisters@olpretreat.org

Website: www.stclaresretreat.com

28th, 29th, 30th September 2021

St Michael the Archangel Mission

Venue: TBC

Texas, USA

Contact: Deacon G. Rodriguez

Phone: +1-877-218-7884

Phone: +1-281-358-9195

Email: Info@fullnessoftruth.org

Website: www.FullnessofTruth.org

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The Angels Magazine



Under the protection of St Michael the Archangel

Saint Michael the Archangel occupies a singular place among those God has chosen as our intercessors. Christian tradition ascribes to him one of the most important missions in the work of re-establishing God's rightful place in the world and the salvation of mankind. The exceptional vocation of the Great Archangel is described in the invocations of the litany: Divine Messenger, Herald of Divine Glory, Guardian and Patron of the Church, Vanquisher of Satan, Terror of the Evil Spirits, Fortress of the People of God, Protector of Righteous Souls and Shield in Temptation.

Saint Michael the Archangel reveals himself today as a gift of the Merciful Father for the salvation of the whole of mankind. While evil gathers strength, lost and directionless human beings, indifferent to eternal values, retreat into egotism and live for the day, and while false prophets offer a world without God, the Creator once again shows His boundless love for His children, sending them the protection of the Great Archangel. His uncompromising stand for God holds back and disables the powers of evil, restoring order to creation, is a source of strength and enthusiasm for the faithful, enabling them to shape the world according to the Will of the Creator.

His love of and awareness of the significance of his mission to the

whole of humanity has caused St Michael the Archangel, in the form of the copy of the figure from the miraculous grotto in Monte Sant'Angelo in Italy, using the Michaelites as his agents, to set out on a journey to meet people. Poland, where he has hitherto visited over 800 parishes, has



been particularly marked out in his mission. By means of his presence in particular places in our country, he stands close to each person and intercedes for them: grounding them in the faith, making them aware of the good, supports them in prioritising right values in their lives, convinces the doubtful, strengthens the weak, brings unity to married couples and families, extricates souls mired in

sin, restoring the purity of their hearts, frees people from captivity. Over 375,000 people, convinced of the effectiveness of heavenly intervention and the constant protection of the archangel, have been invested with the scapular of St Michael. The number of those with a devotion to the archangel, as well as Knights of St Michael the Archangel, is constantly growing.

The book which we now present for your attention answers the need for reliable knowledge about the person of St Michael the Archangel among the faithful, and also serves as a useful resource for use in preparing homilies and catechesis on the subject.

Part of the foreword by
Fr **Dariusz Wilk**
Superior General
of the Congregation of
St Michael the Archangel

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