

The Angels

Messengers from a loving God



**World blessed
by the sword
of St Michael**

**St John Paul II
– a pilgrim**

**New Age ideas
to be aware of**

**I met an angel
in New York once**

**Why we need St Michael
the Archangel**



The majesty of heavenly angelic beings



Angels accompany us like a shadow, constantly, and at the same time they are the farthest because they are very mysterious beings.

Angels are the Army of God. The human army usually divides into platoons and companies and the army of angels into choirs, legions and hosts.

These beings are divided into choirs, hosts and legions. When God created the world, He said to angels: Look, this is a man. He is lower than you but I love him so much. I want him to be my child. You are to serve him. You are to call me Lord. He may call Me Father. I want him to be at the very top of My house, My Father's house.

Only God can say in what order of importance the angels take. This decision of God required extraordinary humility among the angels who were intelligent beings. The highest choirs of angels in the celestial hierarchy of creation are the Seraphim, the Cherubim and the Thrones. All these holy angels are pure spirits of contemplation. The Seraphim's love and holiness is so great that it fills all creation in and through God. The intense love

of the Seraphim protects the whole cosmos. It spills over and guards the entire world as it pours down through the lower eight choirs of angels.

If Jesus needed angels in living and doing His Father's will, we also need them. If Our Lady needed St Gabriel the Archangel – we need angels. If St Joseph received a message from God by an angelic postman in his dream – we need angels. We need both our guardian angel and St Michael the Archangel. We should pray to and call on them many times during the day. They are thrilled when we call ask them to intercede for us.

I assure you of the constant daily prayers of the priests of the Congregation of St Michael the Archangel for all our readers and their families.

God bless you,

Fr **Peter Prusakiewicz** CSMA
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The Angels

Messengers from a loving God

A Catholic Quarterly Magazine on Holy Angels

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The editors reserve the right to modify and edit submitted articles with a view to brevity, clarity and style.

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Imprimatur: General Superior of the Congregation of St Michael the Archangel

Circulation: 2 700

ISSN 2081-5077

Printed in Poland

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Karol Wojtyła supports us from heaven

The year of 2020 is the centenary of the birth of Pope John Paul II. Pope emeritus, Benedict XVI, knew him personally and in this letter recollects the late pope's life. They were friends and co-workers for years.

100 years ago, on May 18th, Pope John Paul II was born in the small Polish town of Wadowice.

After having been divided for over 100 years by the three neighbouring major powers of Prussia, Russia, and Austria, Poland regained her independence at the end of the First World War. It was a historic event that gave birth to great hope; but it also demanded much hardship as the new state, in the process of her reorganization, continued to feel the pressure of the two powers of Germany and Russia. In this situation of oppression, but above all in this situation marked by hope, young Karol Wojtyła grew up. He lost his mother and his brother quite early and, in the end, his father as well, from whom he gained deep and warm piety. The young Karol was particularly drawn by literature and theatre. After passing his final secondary school exam, he chose to study these subjects.

“In order to avoid the deportation, in the fall of 1940 he went to work in a quarry of the Solvay chemical plant.”

(cf. Gift and Mystery). “In the fall of 1942, he made the final decision to enter the Seminary of Kraków, which Kraków's Archbishop Sapieha had secretly established in his residence. As a factory worker, Karol already started studying theology in old textbooks; and so, on 1st November 1946, he could be ordained a priest.” (cf. Ibid.) Of course, Karol not only studied theology in books but also through his experience of the difficult situation that he and his country found itself in. This is somewhat a characteristic of his whole life and work. He studied books but the questions that they posed became the reality that he profoundly experienced and lived.

Shaped by The Second Vatican Council

As a young bishop – as an auxiliary bishop since 1958 and then



■ Young Karol Wojtyła working in the Solvay chemical plant, around 1940

Archbishop of Kraków from 1964 – the Second Vatican Council became the school of his entire life and work. The important questions that appeared, especially in connection with the so-called Schema 13 which would subsequently become the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, were questions that were also his own. The answers developed by the council would pave the way for his mission as bishop and, later, as pope.

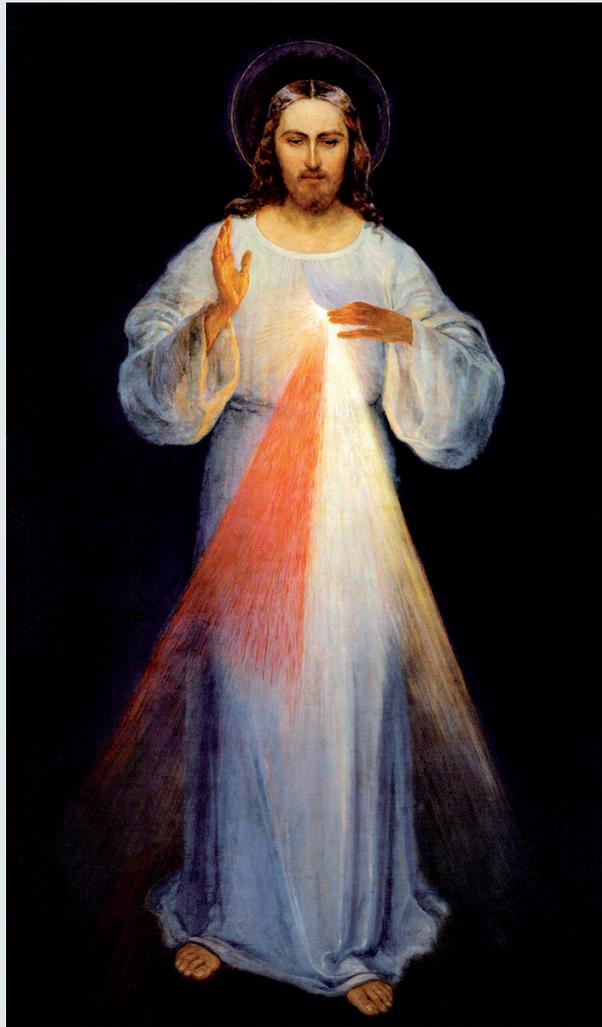
When Cardinal Wojtyła was elected as the successor of St Peter on 16th October 1978, the Church was in a

dramatic situation. The deliberations of the council had been presented to the public as a dispute over the Faith itself, which seemed to deprive the council of its infallible and unwavering sureness. A Bavarian parish priest, for example, commented on the situation by saying, “In the end, we fell into the wrong faith.” This feeling that nothing was no longer certain, that everything was questioned, was kindled even more by the method of implementation of liturgical reform. In the end, it almost seemed that the liturgy could be created of itself. Paul VI brought the council to an end with energy and determination, but after its conclusion, he faced ever more pressing problems that ultimately questioned the existence of the Church Herself. At that time, sociologists compared the Church’s situation to the situation of the Soviet Union under the rule of Gorbachev, during which the powerful structure of the Soviet state collapsed under the process of its reform.

Therefore, in essence, an almost impossible task was awaiting the new pope. Yet, from the first moment on, John Paul II aroused new enthusiasm for Christ and his Church. His words from the sermon at the inauguration of his pontificate: “Do not be afraid! Open, open wide the doors for Christ!” This call and tone would characterize his entire pontificate and made him a liberating restorer of the Church. This was conditioned by the fact that the new pope came from a country

where the council’s reception had been positive: one of a joyful renewal of everything rather than an attitude of doubt and uncertainty in all.

The Pope travelled the world, having made 104 pastoral voyages, proclaiming the Gospel wherever he went as a message of joy, explaining in this way the obligation to defend



■ Divine Mercy Image by Eugeniusz Kazimirowski, 1934

what is good and to be for Christ.

In his fourteen encyclicals, he comprehensively presented the faith of the Church and its teaching in a human way. By doing this, he inevitably sparked contradiction in the Church of the West, clouded by doubt and uncertainty.

The Pope of Divine Mercy

It seems important today to define the true centre, from the perspective of which we can read the message contained in the various texts.

We could have noticed it at the hour of his death. Pope John Paul II died in the first moments of the newly established Feast of Divine Mercy. Let me first add a brief personal remark that seems an important aspect of the Pope’s nature and work. From the very beginning, John Paul II was deeply touched by the message of Faustina Kowalska, a nun from Kraków, who emphasized Divine Mercy as an essential centre of the Christian faith. She had hoped for the establishment of such a feast day. After consultation, the Pope chose the Second Sunday of Easter. However, before the final decision was made, he asked the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to express its view on the appropriateness of this date. We responded negatively because such an ancient, traditional and meaningful date like the Sunday “in Albis” concluding

the Octave of Easter should not be burdened with modern ideas. It was certainly not easy for the Holy Father to accept our reply. Yet, he did so with great humility and accepted our negative response a second time. Finally, he formulated a proposal that left the Second Sunday of Easter

in its historical form but included Divine Mercy in its original message. There have often been similar cases in which I was impressed by the humility of this great Pope, who abandoned ideas he cherished because he could not find the approval of the official organs that must be asked according established norms.

When John Paul II took his last breaths on this world, the prayer of the First Vespers of the Feast of Divine Mercy had just ended. This illuminated the hour of his death: the light of God's mercy stands as a comforting message over his death. In his last book *Memory and Identity*, which was published on the eve of his death, the Pope once again summarized the message of Divine Mercy. He pointed out that Sister Faustina died before the horrors of the Second World War but already gave the Lord's answer to all this unbearable strife. It was as if Christ wanted to say through Faustina: "Evil will not get the final victory. The mystery of Easter affirms that good will ultimately be victorious, that life will triumph over death, and that love will overcome hatred".

Throughout his life, the Pope sought to subjectively appropriate the objective centre of Christian faith, the doctrine of salvation, and to help others to make it theirs. Through the resurrected Christ, God's mercy is intended for every individual. Although this centre of Christian existence is given to us only in faith, it is also philosophically significant, because if God's mercy

were not a fact, then we would have to find our way in a world where the ultimate power of good against evil is not recognizable. It is finally, beyond this objective historical significance, indispensable for everyone to know that in the end God's mercy is stronger than our weakness. Moreover, at this point, the inner unity of the message

our moral endeavours are made in the light of divine mercy, which proves to be a force that heals for our weakness.

Great and saint

While Pope John Paul II was dying, St Peter's Square was filled with people, especially many young people, who wanted to meet their Pope one last time. I cannot forget the moment when Archbishop Sandri announced the message of the Pope's departure. Above all, the moment when the great bell of St Peter's took up this message remains unforgettable. On the day of his funeral, there were many posters with the words "Santo subito!" It was a cry that rose from the encounter with John Paul II from all sides. Not from the square but also in different intellectual circles the idea of giving John Paul II the title "the Great" was discussed.

The word "saint" indicates God's sphere and the word "great" the human dimension. According to the Church's standards, sanctity can be recognized by two criteria: heroic virtues and a miracle. These two standards are closely related. Since the word "heroic virtue" does not mean a kind of Olympic achievement but rather that something becomes visible in and through a person that is not his own but God's work which becomes recognizable in and through him. This is not a kind of moral competition, but the result of renouncing



■ As the Bishop of Kraków between 1951-1967

of John Paul II and the basic intentions of Pope Francis can also be found: John Paul II is not the moral rigorist as some have partially portrayed him. With the centrality of divine mercy, he gives us the opportunity to accept moral requirement for man, even if we can never fully meet it. Besides,

one's own greatness. The point is that a person lets God work on him, and so God's work and power become visible through him.

The same applies to the criterion of the miracle: here too, what counts is not that something sensational is happening but the visible revelation of God's healing goodness, which transcends all merely human possibilities. A saint is the man who is open to God and permeated by God. A holy man is the one who leads away from himself and lets us see and recognize God. Checking this juridically, as far as possible, is the purpose of the two processes for beatification and canonization. In the case of John Paul II, both were carried out strictly according to the applicable rules. So, now he stands before us as the Father, who makes God's mercy and kindness visible to us.

It is more difficult to correctly define the term "great." In the course of the almost 2,000-year long history of the papacy, the title "the Great" has been maintained only for two popes: Leo I (440-461) and Gregory I (590-604). In the case of both, the word "great" has a political connotation, but precisely because something of the mystery of God himself becomes visible through their political success. Through dialogue, Leo the Great was able to convince Attila, the Prince of Huns, to spare Rome – the city of the Apostolic Princes Peter and Paul. Without weapons, without military or political power, through the power of his conviction for his faith, he was able to convince the feared tyrant to spare Rome. In the struggle between the spirit and power, the spirit proved stronger.

Gregory I's success was not as spectacular, but he was repeatedly able to protect Rome against the Lombards – here too, by opposing the spirit against power and winning the victory of the spirit.

If we compare both stories with that of John Paul II, the similarity is unmistakable. John Paul II also had no military or political power. During the discussion about the future shape of Europe and Germany in February 1945, it was said that the Pope's reaction should also be taken into account. Stalin then asked: "How many divisions does the Pope have?" Well, he had no available division. However, the power of faith turned out to be a force that finally unhinged the Soviet power system in 1989 and made a new beginning possible. Undisputedly, the Pope's faith was an essential element in the collapse of the powers. And so, the greatness that appeared in Leo I and Gregory I is certainly also visible here.

Let us leave open the question of whether the epithet "the great" will prevail or not. It is true that God's power and goodness have become visible to all of us in John Paul II. In a time when the Church is again suffering from the oppression of evil, he is for us a sign of hope and confidence.

Dear Saint John Paul II, Pray for us!

Benedict XVI, Pope Emeritus
Letter from 4th May 2020
on the 100th anniversary
of birth of John Paul II.

Taken from: www.vatican.va
Pictures: Archdiocese Museum
of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła in Kraków
www.archimuzeum.pl

What spiritual heritage did Pope Saint John Paul II leave for the English-speaking countries?

Departing from Ireland in 1979, Pope John Paul II emphasised the importance of unity of Spirit and faithfulness to the teaching of the Catholic Church among the Irish people.

Ireland always faithful

"The time has come for me to leave Ireland, to continue my pastoral mission, my apostolic journey.

"I came here to proclaim peace and love, to speak to you about the Son of God made man, about your life in Christ. Yes, as Successor of the Apostle Peter I came to confirm my brethren in the faith, and to ask all Ireland to lift up its heart to a new vision of hope—in the words of Saint Paul: to 'Christ Jesus our hope' (*1 Tim 1:1*).

"I began my pilgrimage under the protection of our Blessed Lady, and on the Feast of the Archangels. And I take leave of you on the Feast of Theresa of the Child Jesus, splendid example of joyful simplicity, and proof of the extraordinary effectiveness of generous Christian love.

"I am deeply grateful for all the kindnesses shown me by the civil and religious authorities of this land. I also thank those who worked so hard and with such great skill here in Ireland to organize the many details of this visit. I thank all the people for the warm and loving reception in which they manifested their keen sense of humanity and their lively faith.



IRELAND



CANADA



AUSTRALIA



UNITED STATES

St John Paul II – a pilgrim

“With the Apostle Paul, I now beg you for ever ‘to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called ... eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’ (*Eph 4:1, 3*).

“In the name of the Lord I exhort you to preserve the great treasure of your fidelity to Jesus Christ and to his Church. Like the early Christian community described in the Acts of the Apostles, Ireland is called to be ‘faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers’ (*Acts 2:42*).

“Ireland: semper fidelis, always faithful! Ireland: always faithful! Moladh go deo le Dia!”

Christians in Canada have the Holy Spirit

Pope John Paul II visited Canada in September 1984. In his farewell message he left Canadians with a spiritual legacy to stay faithful to the inspiration of their great founders who brought the Gospel to that land.

“I wish for the Canadian people a happy future, the development of all their qualities, a life lived in harmony and in respect for their cultural and

spiritual differences. This is facilitated, I am aware, by the institutions of this country. You have before you many challenging tasks, both in order to face the internal difficulties which remain, notably the economic crisis, and in order to develop your positive contribution to international life. May the awareness of these duties lead you to fulfil them with the courage, the nobility and the unselfishness of those who find their joy in the service of their brothers and sisters!

“To you, the members of the People of God in this country, I entrust one of my best remembrances of the different stages of this pilgrimage: together we have been able to live a striking experience of the faith that unites us. I am well aware that the sympathy that you have manifested in my regard expresses, beyond my person, your real bonds with the universal Church, with the Church rooted in the faith of the Apostles ever since the Resurrection of the Lord and the beginning of the missionary era of Pentecost.

“In my coming to your communities, I have discovered with joy that you are continuing what the great founders, whom you so greatly honour, began. They brought the Gospel here, sometimes at the price of their lives; they built an edifice which continues to be full of life despite the difficulties and changes of our times.

Be faithful to the inspiration of the known and unknown saints who have sown in this land the seed that was destined to bear fruit.

“We have celebrated together, we have prayed to the Lord, we have been in communion with him, we have listened to his word. Your fervour is the sign that the message of the Successor of Peter, who has come to bear witness to Jesus Christ, has found men and women ready to work for a new world. It is the sign that the Christians of this country have the Holy Spirit living within them – the Holy Spirit who infuses into our hearts the love of God, who strengthens us in hope and gives fullness to our faith.”

Australia is a fair land

Pope John Pope II went on a pilgrimage to Australia in 1986. He suggested to the Australian people to remember who they were and what they could offer the world.

“Dear people of Australia, dear friends, this moment of farewell is linked with the joyful memory of my arrival in Canberra a week ago, and of so many wonderful events since then.

“For many months I had planned and looked forward earnestly to this

pastoral visit. I was pleased that it would bring me to every state and territory in Australia, and that it would give me an opportunity to meet Australians from many walks of life and widely differing backgrounds. And as I now prepare to depart, I want you to know how much this visit has meant to me.

“I have experienced the warmth and hospitality of the whole Australian nation. You have truly opened your hearts to me and received me as a friend and brother. The vastness of your country, with all its majestic features and natural beauty, is surpassed only by the hospitality and enthusiastic spirit of its people, from the Aborigines and Islander people whom I met in Alice Springs to your most recent immigrants, whom I seemed to encounter at nearly every stop along the way. In the youth and in the elderly, and in all the parents with their families, I have had the joy of discovering the secret of Australia’s greatness, your most precious treasures.

“It was a special joy for me to be with my brothers and sisters of the Catholic faith. In all the places I visited, I had the privilege of joining the local churches in celebrating the Eucharist, the source and summit of Christian life.

“As chief Pastor of the Catholic Church, I have the responsibility of confirming all the local churches in their faith and of encouraging them to persevere in fidelity to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Not only has it been a great pleasure to fulfil this apostolic mission in Australia, it has also been truly inspiring. The Church in Australia, like Australia herself, is young and vigorous. She is eager to do great things for Christ and for all humanity.

“It is with profound gratitude that I say goodbye this morning I thank the federal, state and civic authorities who have so generously assisted me, especially the Prime Minister who has honoured me by his presence and his words. Once again I thank the Catholic bishops, as well as your government for inviting me to come. I am deeply grateful for all the arrangements that have made my stay among you possible. In particular I am grateful to all those concerned with the security arrangements of my visit. I thank those who provided for my transportation to the various venues and all the people of the communications media who helped give such widespread coverage to each event of the past week which will always remain for me an unforgettable encounter with Australia’s soul. The beautiful ceremonies and the wonderful spirit of collaboration shown by everyone are special memories for me. And to all of you who have worked so hard and have received me with open arms, I express my lasting thanks.

“I came to Australia to join my brothers and sisters of the Christian faith in celebrating Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life. This is the heart of our faith. This is the basis of our hope. This is the source of our joy.

I also came to speak words of esteem and friendship for all who believe in God, and for all men and women of good will. My message has likewise been a proclamation of human dignity, and an appeal for human solidarity and peace, under the sign of truth and justice, freedom and love.

“And all of this, dear people of Australia, is my wish for you today and in the years ahead. Remember always who you are, where you are

going and why. Remember how much you have to offer to the world and how much its destiny depends on you. As a nation you are called to greatness, for you are called to love God and serve your fellowman! And now: Advance, Australia Fair!”

Peace I leave with you, American people

Pope John Paul II visited the USA in 1979. In his farewell he said that peace is possible when based on freedom, love and justice and recognition of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all men.

“As I am about to conclude my all too brief visit at the world headquarters of the United Nations, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to all who were instrumental in making this visit possible.

“My thanks go first of all to you, Mr Secretary-General, for your kind invitation, which I considered not only a great honour but also an obligation, since it allowed me by my presence here to attest publicly and solemnly to the commitment of the Holy See to collaborate, to the extent consonant with its own mission, with this worthy organization.

“My gratitude goes also to the distinguished President of the Thirty-fourth General Assembly, who honoured me in inviting me to address this unique forum of the delegates of nearly all the nations of the world. By proclaiming the incomparable dignity of every human being and by manifesting my firm belief in the unity and solidarity of all nations,

I have been permitted to affirm once again a basic tenet of my encyclical letter: ‘After all, peace comes down to respect for man’s inviolable rights’ (Redemptor Hominis, 17).

“May I also thank all the distinguished delegates of the nations represented here, as well as the whole staff of the United Nations, for the friendly reception which they have given to the representatives of the Holy See, particularly to our Permanent Observer, Archbishop Giovanni Cheli.

“The message which I wish to leave with you is a message of certitude and hope: the certitude that peace is possible when it is based on the recognition of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all men; the hope that the sense of moral responsibility which every person must assume will make it possible to create a better world in freedom, in justice and in love.

“As one whose ministry is void of meaning except insofar as he is the faithful Vicar of Christ on earth, I now take leave of you with the words of the one whom I represent, of Jesus Christ himself: ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you’ (Jn 14 :27). My constant prayer for all of you is this: that there may be peace in justice and in love. May the praying voice of all those who believe in God—Christians and non-Christians alike—bring it about that the moral resources present in the hearts of men and women of good will be united for the common good, and call down from heaven that peace which human efforts alone cannot effect.

May God bless the United Nations.”

Agata Pawłowska, CSMA office
Pope John Paul II addresses taken
from: www.vatican.va

The Hail Mary (Part 2)



■ St Pope John Paul II

Pope John Paul II, who was devoted to Our Blessed Mother Mary, wrote of the importance and meaning of this prayer in his apostolic letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, issued on October 16th, 2002, the “Year of the Rosary” and at the beginning of the twenty-fifth year of his pontificate.

CHAPTER II MYSTERIES OF CHRIST – MYSTERIES OF HIS MOTHER

The Rosary, “a compendium of the Gospel”

18. The only way to approach the contemplation of Christ’s face is by listening in the Spirit to the Father’s voice, since “no one knows the Son except the Father” (Mt 11:27). In the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus responded to Peter’s confession of faith by indicating the source of that clear intuition of his identity: “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 16:17). What is needed, then, is a revelation from above. In order to receive that revelation, attentive listening is indispensable: “Only *the experience of silence and prayer* offers the proper setting for

the growth and development of a true, faithful and consistent knowledge of that mystery”.

The Rosary is one of the traditional paths of Christian prayer directed to the contemplation of Christ’s face. Pope Paul VI described it in these words: “As a Gospel prayer, centred on the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation, the Rosary is a prayer with a clearly Christological orientation. Its most characteristic element, in fact, the litany-like succession of *Hail Marys*, becomes in itself an unceasing praise of Christ, who is the ultimate object both of the angel’s announcement and of the greeting of the mother of John the Baptist: ‘Blessed is the fruit of your womb’ (Lk 1:42). We would go further and say that the succession of *Hail Marys* constitutes the warp on which is woven the contemplation of the mysteries. The Jesus that each *Hail Mary* recalls is the same Jesus whom the succession of mysteries proposes to us now as the Son of God, now as the Son of the Virgin”.

A proposed addition to the traditional pattern

19. Of the many mysteries of Christ's life, only a few are indicated by the Rosary in the form that has become generally established with the seal of the Church's approval. The selection was determined by the origin of the prayer, which was based on the number 150, the number of the Psalms in the Psalter.

I believe, however, that to bring out fully the Christological depth of the Rosary it would be suitable to make an addition to the traditional pattern which, while left to the freedom of individuals and communities, could broaden it to include the mysteries of Christ's public ministry between his Baptism and his Passion. In the course of those mysteries we contemplate important aspects of the person of Christ as the definitive revelation of God. Declared the beloved Son of the Father at the baptism in the Jordan, Christ is the one who announces the coming of the Kingdom, bears witness to it in his works and proclaims its demands. It is during the years of his public ministry that the mystery of Christ is most evidently a mystery of light: "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (Jn 9:5).

Consequently, for the Rosary to become more fully a "compendium of the Gospel", it is fitting to add, following reflection on the Incarnation and the hidden life of Christ (the joyful mysteries) and before focusing on the sufferings of his Passion (the sorrowful mysteries) and the triumph of his Resurrection (the glorious mysteries), a meditation on certain particularly significant moments in his public ministry (the mysteries of light). This

addition of these new mysteries, without prejudice to any essential aspect of the prayer's traditional format, is meant to give it fresh life and to enkindle renewed interest in the Rosary's place within Christian spirituality as a true doorway to the depths of the heart of Christ, ocean of joy and of light, of suffering and of glory.

The Joyful Mysteries

20. The first five decades, the "joyful mysteries", are marked by the joy radiating from the event of the Incarnation. This is clear from the very first mystery, the Annunciation, where Gabriel's greeting to the Virgin of Nazareth is linked to an invitation to messianic joy: "Rejoice, Mary". The whole of salvation history, in some sense the entire history of the world, has led up to this greeting. If it is the Father's plan to unite all things in Christ (cf. Eph 1:10), then the whole of the universe is in some way touched by the divine favour with which the Father looks upon Mary and makes her the Mother of his Son. The whole of humanity, in turn, is embraced by the *fiat* with which she readily agrees to the will of God.

Exultation is the keynote of the encounter with Elizabeth, where the sound of Mary's voice and the presence of Christ in her womb cause John to "leap for joy" (cf. Lk 1:44). Gladness also fills the scene in Bethlehem, when the birth of the divine Child, the Saviour of the world, is announced by the song of the angels and proclaimed to the shepherds as "news of great joy" (Lk 2:10).

The final two mysteries, while preserving this climate of joy, already point to the drama yet to come. The Presentation in the Temple not only

expresses the joy of the Child's consecration and the ecstasy of the aged Simeon; it also records the prophecy that Christ will be a "sign of contradiction" for Israel and that a sword will pierce his mother's heart (cf. Lk 2:34-35). Joy mixed with drama marks the fifth mystery, the finding of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple. Here he appears in his divine wisdom as he listens and raises questions, already in effect one who "teaches". The revelation of his mystery as the Son wholly dedicated to his Father's affairs proclaims the radical nature of the Gospel, in which even the closest of human relationships are challenged by the absolute demands of the Kingdom. Mary and Joseph, fearful and anxious, "did not understand" his words (Lk 2:50).

To meditate upon the "joyful" mysteries, then, is to enter into the ultimate causes and the deepest meaning of Christian joy. It is to focus on the realism of the mystery of the Incarnation and on the obscure foreshadowing of the mystery of the saving Passion. Mary leads us to discover the secret of Christian joy, reminding us that Christianity is, first and foremost, *euangelion*, "good news", which has as its heart and its whole content the person of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, the one Saviour of the world.

The Mysteries of Light

21. Moving on from the infancy and the hidden life in Nazareth to the public life of Jesus, our contemplation brings us to those mysteries which may be called in a special way "mysteries of light". Certainly the whole mystery of Christ is a mystery of light. He is the "light of the world" (Jn 8:12). Yet this truth emerges in a



special way during the years of his public life, when he proclaims the Gospel of the Kingdom. In proposing to the Christian community five significant moments – “luminous” mysteries – during this phase of Christ’s life, I think that the following can be fittingly singled out:

- (1) his Baptism in the Jordan,
- (2) his self-manifestation at the wedding of Cana,
- (3) his proclamation of the Kingdom of God, with his call to conversion,
- (4) his Transfiguration, and finally,
- (5) his institution of the Eucharist, as the sacramental expression of the Paschal Mystery.

Each of these mysteries is a revelation of the Kingdom now present in the very person of Jesus. The Baptism in the Jordan is first of all a mystery of light. Here, as Christ descends into the waters, the innocent one who became “sin” for our sake (cf. 2Cor 5:21), the heavens open wide and the voice of the Father declares him the beloved Son (cf. Mt 3:17 and parallels), while the Spirit descends on him to invest him with the mission which he is to carry out. Another mystery of light is the first of the signs, given at Cana (cf. Jn 2:1–12), when Christ changes water into wine and opens the hearts of the disciples to faith, thanks to the

intervention of Mary, the first among believers. Another mystery of light is the preaching by which Jesus proclaims the coming of the Kingdom of God, calls to conversion (cf. Mk 1:15) and forgives the sins of all who draw near to him in humble trust (cf. Mk 2:3–13; Lk 7:47–48): the inauguration of that ministry of mercy which he continues to exercise until the end of the world, particularly through the Sacrament of Reconciliation which he has entrusted to his Church (cf. Jn 20:22–23). The mystery of light *par excellence* is the Transfiguration, traditionally believed to have taken place on Mount Tabor. The glory of the Godhead shines forth from the face of Christ as the Father commands the astonished Apostles to “listen to him” (cf. Lk 9:35 and parallels) and to prepare to experience with him the agony of the Passion, so as to come with him to the joy of the Resurrection and a life transfigured by the Holy Spirit. A final mystery of light is the institution of the Eucharist, in which Christ offers his body and blood as food under the signs of bread and wine, and testifies “to the end” his love for humanity (Jn 13:1), for whose salvation he will offer himself in sacrifice.

In these mysteries, apart from the miracle at Cana, the presence of

Mary remains in the background. The Gospels make only the briefest reference to her occasional presence at one moment or other during the preaching of Jesus (cf. Mk 3:31–5; Jn 2:12), and they give no indication that she was present at the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist. Yet the role she assumed at Cana in some way accompanies Christ throughout his ministry. The revelation made directly by the Father at the Baptism in the Jordan and echoed by John the Baptist is placed upon Mary’s lips at Cana, and it becomes the great maternal counsel which Mary addresses to the Church of every age: “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5). This counsel is a fitting introduction to the words and signs of Christ’s public ministry and it forms the Marian foundation of all the “mysteries of light”.

The Sorrowful Mysteries

22. The Gospels give great prominence to the sorrowful mysteries of Christ. From the beginning Christian piety, especially during the Lenten devotion of the Way of the Cross, has focused on the individual moments of the Passion, realizing that here is found the culmination of the revelation of God’s love and the source of our salvation. The Rosary selects certain moments from the Passion, inviting the faithful to contemplate them in their hearts and to relive them. The sequence of meditations begins with Gethsemane, where Christ experiences a moment of great anguish before the will of the Father, against which the weakness of the flesh would be tempted to rebel. There Jesus encounters all the temptations and confronts all the sins of humanity, in order to

say to the Father: “Not my will but yours be done” (Lk 22:42 and parallels). This “Yes” of Christ reverses the “No” of our first parents in the Garden of Eden. And the cost of this faithfulness to the Father’s will is made clear in the following mysteries; by his scourging, his crowning with thorns, his carrying the Cross and his death on the Cross, the Lord is cast into the most abject suffering: *Ecce homo!*

This abject suffering reveals not only the love of God but also the meaning of man himself.

Ecce homo: the meaning, origin and fulfilment of man is to be found in Christ, the God who humbles himself out of love “even unto death, death on a cross” (Phil 2:8). The sorrowful mysteries help the believer to relive the death of Jesus, to stand at the foot of the Cross beside Mary, to enter with her into the depths of God’s love for man and to experience all its life-giving power.

The Glorious Mysteries

23. “The contemplation of Christ’s face cannot stop at the image of the Crucified One. He is the Risen One!” The Rosary has always expressed this knowledge born of faith and invited the believer to pass beyond the darkness of the Passion in order to gaze upon Christ’s glory in the Resurrection and Ascension. Contemplating the Risen One, Christians rediscover the reasons for their own faith (cf. 1Cor 15:14) and relive the joy not only of those to whom Christ appeared – the Apostles, Mary Magdalene and the disciples on the road to Emmaus – but also the joy of Mary, who must have had an equally intense experience of the new life of her glorified Son. In the Ascension, Christ was raised in glory

to the right hand of the Father, while Mary herself would be raised to that same glory in the Assumption, enjoying beforehand, by a unique privilege, the destiny reserved for all the just at the resurrection of the dead. Crowned in glory – as she appears in the last glorious mystery – Mary shines forth as Queen of the Angels and Saints, the anticipation and the supreme realization of the eschatological state of the Church.

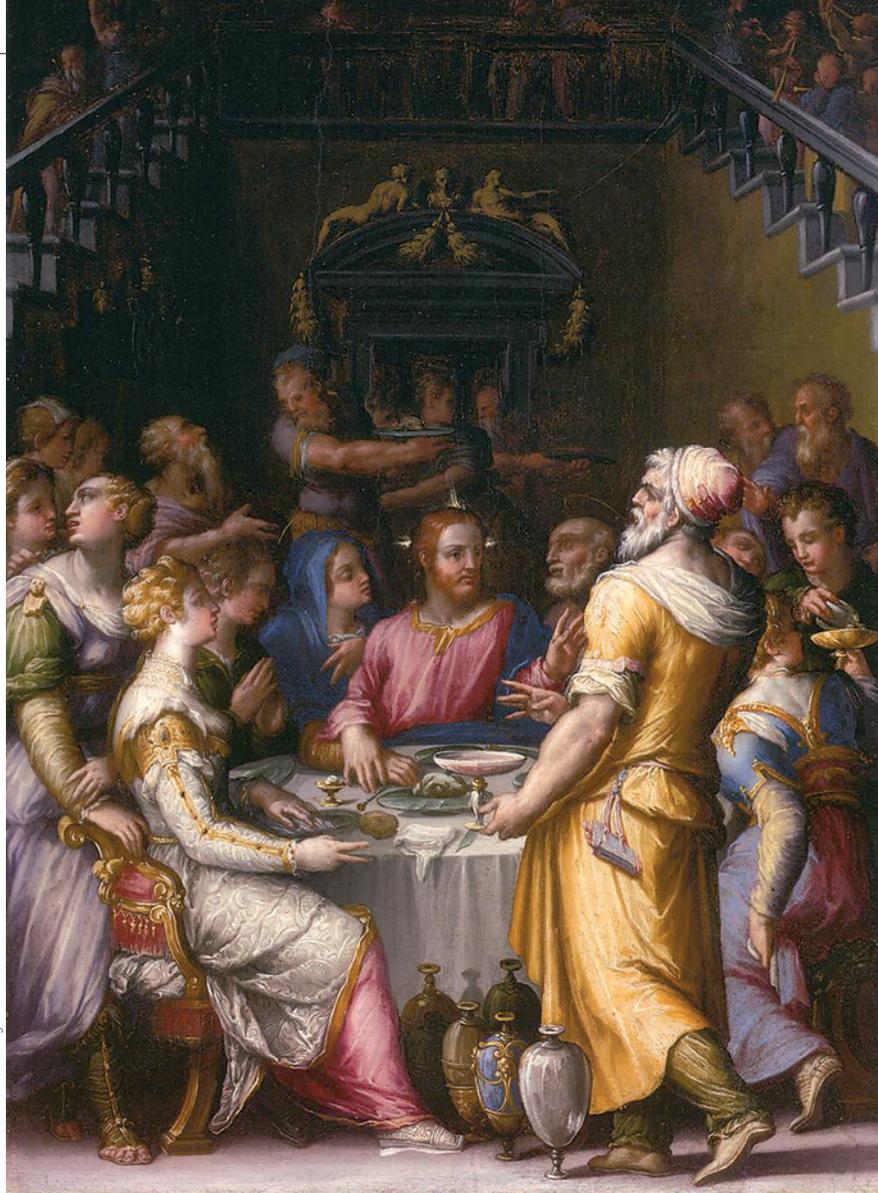
At the centre of this unfolding sequence of the glory of the Son and the Mother, the Rosary sets before us the third glorious mystery, Pentecost, which reveals the face of the Church as a family gathered together with Mary, enlivened by the powerful outpouring of the Spirit and ready for the mission of evangelization. The contemplation of this scene, like that of the other glorious mysteries, ought to lead the faithful to an ever-greater appreciation of their new life in Christ, lived in the heart of the Church, a life of which the scene of Pentecost itself is the great “icon”. The glorious mysteries thus lead the faithful to greater hope for the eschatological goal towards which they journey as members of the pilgrim People of God in history. This can only impel them to bear courageous witness to that “good news” which gives meaning to their entire existence.

From “mysteries” to the “Mystery” Mary’s way

24. The cycles of meditation proposed by the Holy Rosary are by no means exhaustive, but they do bring to mind what is essential and they awaken in the soul a thirst for a knowledge of Christ continually nourished by the pure source of the

Gospel. Every individual event in the life of Christ, as narrated by the Evangelists, is resplendent with the Mystery that surpasses all understanding (cf. Eph 3:19): the Mystery of the Word made flesh, in whom “all the fullness of God dwells bodily” (Col 2:9). For this reason the Catechism of the Catholic Church places great emphasis on the mysteries of Christ, pointing out that “everything in the life of Jesus is a sign of his Mystery”. The “*duc in altum*” of the Church of the third millennium will be determined by the ability of Christians to enter into the “perfect knowledge of God’s mystery, of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:2-3). The Letter to the Ephesians makes this heartfelt prayer for all the baptized: “May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, so that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power... to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph 3:17-19).

The Rosary is at the service of this ideal; it offers the “secret” which leads easily to a profound and inward knowledge of Christ. We might call it Mary’s way. It is the way of the example of the Virgin of Nazareth, a woman of faith, of silence, of attentive listening. It is also the way of a Marian devotion inspired by knowledge of the inseparable bond between Christ and his Blessed Mother: the mysteries of Christ are also in some sense the mysteries of his Mother, even when they do not involve her directly, for she lives from him and through him. By making our own the words of the Angel Gabriel and Saint Elizabeth contained in the *Hail Mary*, we find ourselves constantly drawn to



■ Marriage at Cana by Giorgio Vasari, 1566

seek out afresh in Mary, in her arms and in her heart, the “blessed fruit of her womb” (cf Lk 1:42).

Mystery of Christ, mystery of man

25. In my testimony of 1978 mentioned above, where I described the Rosary as my favourite prayer, I used an idea to which I would like to return. I said then that “the simple prayer of the Rosary marks the rhythm of human life”.

In the light of what has been said so far on the mysteries of Christ, it is not difficult to go deeper into this

anthropological significance of the Rosary, which is far deeper than may appear at first sight. Anyone who contemplates Christ through the various stages of his life cannot fail to perceive in him the truth about man. This is the great affirmation of the Second Vatican Council which I have so often discussed in my own teaching since the Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*: “it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man is seen in its true light”. The Rosary helps to open up the way to this light. Following in the path of Christ, in whom man’s path is “recapitulated”, revealed and redeemed,

believers come face to face with the image of the true man. Contemplating Christ’s birth, they learn of the sanctity of life; seeing the household of Nazareth, they learn the original truth of the family according to God’s plan; listening to the Master in the mysteries of his public ministry, they find the light which leads them to enter the Kingdom of God; and following him on the way to Calvary, they learn the meaning of salvific suffering. Finally, contemplating Christ and his Blessed Mother in glory, they see the goal towards which each of us is called, if we allow ourselves to be healed and transformed by the Holy Spirit. It could be said that each mystery of the Rosary, carefully meditated, sheds light on the mystery of man.

At the same time, it becomes natural to bring to this encounter with the sacred humanity of the Redeemer all the problems, anxieties, labours and endeavours which go to make up our lives. “Cast your burden on the Lord and he will sustain you” (Ps 55:23). To pray the Rosary is to hand over our burdens to the merciful hearts of Christ and his Mother. Twenty-five years later, thinking back over the difficulties which have also been part of my exercise of the Petrine ministry, I feel the need to say once more, as a warm invitation to everyone to experience it personally: the Rosary does indeed “mark the rhythm of human life”, bringing it into harmony with the “rhythm” of God’s own life, in the joyful communion of the Holy Trinity, our life’s destiny and deepest longing.

Apostolic Letter
Rosarium Virginis Mariae
of the Supreme Pontiff **John Paul II**
to the bishops, clergy and faithful
on the most Holy Rosary

Faithful to our mission



Devotion to St Michael the Archangel will grow on earth with each passing day.

Having been instrumental in spreading the devotion to St Michael the Archangel, the Congregation of the Michaelite Fathers are celebrating the hundredth anniversary of their founder Blessed Fr Bronisław Markiewicz.

The angels are mentioned often in the Bible. St Michael is mentioned by name five times in the Bible. Three times in the Book of Daniel – (Dan. 10:13; 10:21; 12:1); the Letter of St Jude, verse 9; the Book of Revelation, chapter 12. The Archangel is shown as the protector of the Chosen People and the New People of God, the Church, as well as the defender of the worship and glory of God.

The first centres of devotion to St Michael the Archangel arose in the Eastern Church. It was from there that the devotion spread to the West from Constantinople in the 5th century, to Italy and Rome. Many of the original sites of the cult of the Angelic Commander have not survived to the present day. Others, however, have remained. Among these the shrine to St Michael the Archangel in Apulia, Italy, appeared at the end of the 5th century at Monte Sant'Angelo on Mount Gargano. It is very much alive to this day and remains the most famous shrine to the Archangel in the world. It is visited by around two million pilgrims annually.

Devotion to the Prince of Heaven also began quite early-on in Poland. The oldest churches with this dedication were already noted in the 11th and 12th centuries and was most widely

spread in the 17th and 18th centuries. It was then that confraternities and associations were formed as well as new churches with the dedication to St Michael. The Polish army also turned to the Prince of the Heavenly Armies for aid in battle. Many army commanders were his devoted followers.

Re-instating the forgotten

Devotion to St Michael the Archangel lessened during the period of the partitions of Poland. It was Fr Bronisław Markiewicz who began to revive the devotion in the area of the Austrian partition in the period between the 19th and 20th centuries. Between the years 1885 and 1892, he lived in Italy in the Salesian congregation of St John Bosco. There he witnessed the growth in devotion to St Michael the Archangel, supported by Pope Leo XIII. This pope approved the Confraternity of the Scapular of St Michael the Archangel, founded in 1878, as well as writing the well-known prayer to St Michael the Archangel and ordered that it be recited after each Low Mass throughout the world. This was on 29th July 1886. Fr Markiewicz would certainly have

recited this prayer while attending the Salesian noviciate in San Benigno Canavese, Italy. He must have noticed that its institution was an important and significant occurrence in the Church. However, this prayer was removed somewhat precipitately, as part of the reform of the liturgy after the Second Vatican Council.

Fr Markiewicz returned to Poland in 1892, where, a few years later, he decided to found a new congregation with the aim to bring up and educate poor and abandoned children and young people. When considering what patron to choose, he chose St Michael the Archangel. He was also advised to do so by his friend in Rome, Prince Michał Radziwiłł, a member of the Confraternity of the Scapular of St Michael the Archangel, who, in 1901, in a letter to Fr Markiewicz, argued the point as follows: "It is the particular role of St Michael the Archangel to protect the Church in the 20th century. You wage war against Satan as you bring up the new generation according to the methods of Don Bosco... The Holy Father desires that devotion to St Michael the Archangel become more widely disseminated and that this saint be more greatly honoured as Protector of the Holy Church."

Fr Markiewicz wrote back: "I would be very happy if the Holy See allows



■ Bl. Fr Bronisław Markiewicz, the founder of the Congregation of St Michael the Archangel

us to be known as 'The Society of St Michael the Archangel' and for us to spread devotion to him on this earth."

In another letter, Fr Markiewicz stated: "It is a curious thing that hitherto there is so little devotion to St Michael the Archangel, despite the fact that for many centuries the Church honours him in the liturgy immediately after the Blessed Mother... Devotion to him will now grow daily on earth."

The prophecy is fulfilled

The Michaelite Fathers zealously carry out the mission of their founder, Blessed Fr Bronisław Markiewicz, in terms of spreading devotion to St Michael the Archangel the patron of their congregation and also the holy angels. They have edited and composed music for the liturgy of the Hours to St Michael the Archangel as well as devotions to him and written many hymns in honour of the Archangel, published in the magazines "Któż jak Bóg" (in Polish, since 1993) and "The Angels" (in English, since 2010). At the heavenly shrine at Monte Sant'Angelo, the Michaelites sell many devotional items such as scapulars and stones

from the miraculous grotto. They have published many informative books and articles about the angels, founded the Knighthood of St Michael the Archangel and revived the Confraternity of St Michael to which many thousands of the faithful belong. They give retreats on St Michael and the angels and in 2012 instituted the scapular of St Michael the Archangel, spreading the prayer of Pope Leo XIII in the form of prayer cards and in their publications, have re-instated its recitation after Holy Mass by the Michaelite congregation and in many hundreds of Polish parishes.

The prayer to St Michael the Archangel resonates all the more today. It is recited after the call to prayer to Our Lady at the shrine at the Jasna Góra Monastery in Częstochowa, Poland.

We fly to Your Protection

In a ceremony held in the Vatican Gardens on 4th July 2013, Pope Francis with Emeritus Pope Benedict by his side consecrated the Vatican City to St Michael the Archangel. The Pope said that this can be seen as an invitation to reflection and prayer

because "Michael fights to re-establish divine justice. He defends the people of God from their enemies especially the enemy par excellence of the devil." We as people of God must follow our Holy Father in earnestly calling on St Michael to protect the church and the whole world.

In October 2018, Pope Francis urged that the "We fly to Your Protection" prayer to Our Lady be recited after the Rosary as well as the prayer to St Michael the Archangel, beseeching the protection of the Church throughout the world. St John Paul II and Pope Francis have frequently asked people to pray to this archangel. The Michaelite initiative of visits by the statue of St Michael from Monte Sant'Angelo to many Polish parishes since 2013 has brought and continues to bring unexpected spiritual fruits and growth of devotion to the angels. (The pilgrim statue of St Michael also receives invitations for day or weekend missions in Australia, Europe and other countries.) It is worth noting that since the beginning of the statue's pilgrimage, over 800,000 people have joined the Confraternity of the Scapular of St Michael the Archangel and many have become Knights of St Michael. This confirms the words that "devotion to St. Michael the Archangel will grow on earth with each passing day" – as Fr Markiewicz had written in 1901.

St Michael in every town and city

In a letter of 30th March 1901 to seminarians studying in Rome, Fr Markiewicz confided: "We resolve to spread devotion to St Michael the

Archangel in a more particular way. If there is no church with this dedication in a particular town, we will institute one.”

This aspect of the will of our founder is also realised to this day, as we set up centres of angelic devotion, both in Poland and abroad. We have built a church of St Michael the Archangel in Toruń (1981-2000), in Pawlikowice near Wieliczka (1989-2001). The construction of the church of St Michael the Archangel is still underway in Młochów near Warsaw (since 2018).

In 2007 a shrine to St Michael the Archangel and Blessed Bronisław Markiewicz was founded beside the congregation’s church in Miejsce Piastowe. Since 2018 the church at the shrine is being enlarged.

At Gatovo in Belarus, the Michaelites commenced building work in the parish of St Michael the Archangel, where a shrine dedicated to him is presently under construction. In Melitopol in the Ukraine they built a church dedicated to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Michael the Archangel (2006-2018), which in 2018 was handed over to the diocese of Kharkiv-Zaporozhye. In Nemby, Paraguay a major seminary dedicated to St Michael the Archangel has been built. In Italy (Castel Sant’Elia in Rome) the ancient church of St Michael the Archangel within the shrine of Santa Maria ad Rupes, which has been under the custody of the Michaelites since 1982, has been reconstructed. In 1995, the congregation began work at the most famous shrine to St Michael the Archangel at Monte Sant’Angelo on Mount Gargano in Italy and took over its spiritual care on a permanent basis a year later. The Michaelites also serve at the parish of St Michael the



■ The Shrine of St Michael in Miejsce Piastowe, Poland

Archangel in Hurstville in Australia and in his shrine in Santiago in the Dominican Republic.

Guardian against profanity

From the start of his priestly life, Father Bronislaw was particularly sensitive towards the religious, moral and material neglect of children. In addition, he sought to alleviate the misery of the local poor folk who suffered severe hardship.

Father Bronislaw said “The world is falling apart because men have destroyed the two pillars of social life, “work and temperance”. Instead, they have placed the emphasis predominately upon intellectual instruction and on science and letting go of “work and temperance”. And yet, our Creator, who knows our needs better than we do, recommends that after having suffered the loss of the bread of life and our salvation, that we should work with the sweat of our brow and that we should observe temperance. Christ in his Gospel adds: “If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his

very self, take up his cross and begin to follow in my footsteps” (Mt 16, 24).

In 1902, Fr Markiewicz wrote: “The Association of Temperance and Work, wishing most fervently to protect and maintain the young people for whose upbringing it is responsible, from all forms of dishonour, has chosen St Michael the Archangel, this most powerful vanquisher of all corruption, as its main patron.”

Entrust the young to St Michael

Let us entrust children and young people to St Michael the Archangel, in order that he may protect them against evil and profanity, strengthen them in goodness and in the Christian faith. “Let us stand with St. Michael the Archangel”, – just as Fr Markiewicz encouraged us – “who wields the victorious banner of the Cross of Christ, and let us remember that, advancing and fighting under this banner, we will successfully overcome all the wickedness and snares of the Evil One.”

Fr Edward Data CSMA

Why we need St Michael the Archangel

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

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

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

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

Good and bad angels

Christ tells us about Satan and hell, explaining his methods of activity. Moreover, Jesus is tempted but He overcomes all the temptations. Christ is victorious and invites us to be victorious too. He reminds us like He reminded the Apostles: "Stay awake, and pray not to be put to the test" (Matt 26:41). He also teaches us the Lord's Prayer with two important requests: "And lead us not into temptation" which means "grant us strength to fight a temptation" and "deliver us from evil". We say these requests in plural form. It means that we pray for ourselves and for others. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church we find the words "Devil" and "Satan" written with a capital letter. These

are the names of a mysterious being rebelling against God. So the world of evil spirits consists of Satan/Devil and other fallen angels called demons. Demons are always in plural, they belong to the kingdom ruled by Satan; they are at his disposal and take his orders. Lateran Council IV stated that demons were created by God as good angels, good by nature but, they become evil by their own decision.

The Devil exists

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

Be courageous

Christ gives us a proper perspective: "Be courageous: I have conquered the world" (John 16:33). Don't be afraid of sin, hell and Satan because it is Christ who triumphs. We read in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC, 395): "The power of Satan is, nonetheless, not infinite. He is only a creature, powerful from the fact that he is pure spirit, but still a creature. He cannot prevent the building up of God's reign. Although Satan may act in the world out of hatred for God and his



kingdom in Christ Jesus, and although his action may cause grave injuries – of a spiritual nature and, indirectly, even of a physical nature – to each man and to society, the action is permitted by divine providence which with strength and gentleness guides human and cosmic history. It is a great mystery that providence should permit diabolical activity, but ‘we know that in everything God works for good with those who love him’” (Rom 8: 28).

Mystery of God

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

The power of St Michael

St Michael the Archangel is an exceptional helper in a spiritual battle. We read in the Book of Revelation: “And now war broke out in heaven, when Michael with his angels attacked the dragon. The dragon fought back with his angels, but they were defeated and driven out of heaven. The great dragon, the primeval serpent, known as the Devil or Satan, who had led all the world astray, was hurled down to the earth and his angels were hurled down with him. Then I heard a voice shout from heaven, ‘Salvation and power and empire for ever have been won by our God, and all authority for his Christ, now that the accuser, who accused our brothers day and night before our God, has been brought down. They have triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word to which they bore witness, because even

in the face of death they did not cling to life’” (Rev 12:7-11).

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

Satan takes seven demons to attack a soul

Hell is not a place you can lock. Satan wants as many people as possible to join him in hell. We need to be aware of that fact. He attacks people usually in their weakest points. And he does not act alone. Christ says he takes seven more demons and they all attack a soul. That is why when he tempts us it is worth calling St Michael. We can do it by the prayer of Pope Leo XIII, written after one of the visions he had in a chapel in St Peter's Basilica. We're not sure what exactly Pope Leo XIII saw but we have his prayer that is well-known and said in various languages all over the world. Originally it was in Latin.

Triumph over evil

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

Let's come back to St Faustina Kowalska, the Apostle of Divine Mercy. She encountered St Michael

the Archangel only once in her lifetime. It was on 29th September, St Michael's feast day in the Catholic Church. She recognised him. She did not write down his looks but his words: "On the Feast of Saint Michael the Archangel, I saw by my side that great Leader, who spoke these words to me: 'The Lord has ordered me to take special care of you. Know that you are hated by evil; but do not fear – Who is like God!' And he disappeared. But I feel his presence and assistance" (Diary, 706).

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

Do not be afraid

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

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

Fr Peter Prusakiewicz CSMA

Totally Yours

Prayer composed by St Maximilian Kolbe and recited by St John Paul II.

Immaculate Conception, Mary, my Mother, live in me, act in me, speak in and through me.

Think your thoughts in my mind. Love, through my heart. Give me your own dispositions and feelings.

Teach, lead and guide me to Jesus. Correct, enlighten and expand my thoughts and behaviour.

Possess my soul. Take over my entire personality and life. Replace it with yourself.

Incline me to constant adoration and thanksgiving. Pray in me and through me. Let me live in you and keep in this union always. Amen



■ Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Chanthaburi, Thailand

World blessed by the sword of St Michael

The sword is linked to an apparition at Monte Sant'Angelo, representing St Michael's miraculous intercession to save the city on multiple occasions.

On Palm Sunday, in the small Apulian town of Monte Sant'Angelo, which houses the sanctuary of St Michael the Archangel, a pilgrimage destination for centuries, an event of great impact took place both in terms of faith and history: the blessing of the city, of Italy and of the world against the Coronavirus with the sword of the one who is called the “supreme head of the celestial army”, together with the Blessed Sacrament and a relic of the Holy Cross, a gift from Frederick II returning from the Crusade of 1228. Historically, to find a similar event it is necessary to go back almost 400 years, to 1656, when the plea with the sword of Saint Michael had arisen against the spread of the plague on the occasion of the fourth appearance of the Archangel on Monte Gargano, by then Bishop Giovanni Alfonso Puccinelli. Usually, in fact, the sword is extracted from the display case and carried in procession only on September 29th, the day on which the Feast of the Archangels St Michael, Gabriel and Raphael occurs.

In introducing the celebration, which took place behind closed



■ Fr Władysław Suchy, the rector of the Shrine, takes out the sword

doors but which recorded thousands of streaming connections, the rector from the Shrine, Fr Władysław Suchy, flanked by two other Michaelite fathers, he said: “May Jesus Christ be praised. Dear ones, we live in this difficult moment not only for our city, but for all of Italy and for the whole world. So tonight, we want to invoke Archangel Michael, who chose this place, who in the Old Testament was the guide and defender of the people of God, and wanted to bless, defend and entrust the holy people of God to this sacred mountain, the holy church. Today we want to invoke him because as in the past, in the various moments of trial, of natural

disasters, even of plague, our fathers in this place have invoked him and have always found his help. His intercession brought in the plague period in 1656 a prodigious salvation for Monte Sant'Angelo. Today we invoke through his intercession the Lord to save not only Monte Sant'Angelo, but all of Gargano, all of Italy, all the world from this epidemic.”

Faith and hope

Afterwards, the mayor of city raised words full of faith and hope: “Archangel Michael, in a city that kneels before you through my knees;

it is a city that looks up to you through my eyes; it is a city that prays to you today through my voice. Just as in 1656, even today we have crossed the iron gate, crossed the stone courtyard, and descended the 86 steps, looking for them in the heart of the sacred mountain. Accept this prayer of ours, defend with your sword our city, our country from this pandemic. Protect this people today as then. Give them the strength to stay united in the face of this terrible emergency. Protect those women and men who took Italy in their arms by trying to ferry it across the tunnel. We implore you Archangel Michael to give us the strength to build a norm in which health care counts more than weapons, workers' guarantees count more than profit, the family, that is, the people with whom we have decided to share our life, whatever age they have, count most of all. May this prayer of ours be a song that goes straight to God."

After the Divine Mercy Chaplet and prayers for healing, participants formed a procession and went through the town with the Blessed



■ Procession with the cross, the sword of St Michael and the Blessed Sacrament around Monte Sant'Angelo

Sacrament, the historic cross and the sword.

These times are exceptional and that is why the Michaelite priests decided to remind the faithful of the powerful protection of St Michael and asked him for help and his intercession and the town, Italy and the whole world were blessed by the sword of St Michael.

Rare procession of the sword

This was an exceptional moment of faith and hope because on this very special Palm Sunday with thousands online streaming we witnessed the rare procession of the Sword of St Michael with only a few present, the priests, nuns and Mayor Pierpaolo d'Arienzo, instead of the large numbers as on 29th September.

It was extraordinary to view the power of the images, the sun shining on the religious, the surrounding silence interrupted only by the wind and the tolling of the bells of the Angevin tower, giving "voice" to the Blessed Sacrament and to the symbols of the crucifixion and the Heavenly Prince, solemnly brought outside the Basilica, to which everyone was able to make his own plea.



■ The Blessed Sacrament outside the Shrine

White stones in reliquaries



This white stone is today our weapon, and a stone as a weapon against evil signifies Christ.

Since the pandemic there has been a huge demand for scapulars and relic stones many new readers and viewers to our websites are very keen to know more about the value of the white stones, housed in reliquaries, from the miraculous sacred cave in Monte Sant'Angelo, Gargano, Italy.

Here is a compendium to frequently asked questions

In memory of the pilgrim statue

The stones are from the heavenly basilica in Gargano, Italy. In memory of the visit of the pilgrim statue of St Michael the Archangel from the shrine in Gargano, between 3-6 May 2013.

Stone is a common and naturally occurring material, utilised by mankind since the earliest times. Its characteristic properties are hardness, roughness and durability, which is why it was thought to be suitable for the writing of texts considered worthy to be preserved in perpetuity. The particular shapes and mysterious colours present within stone seem to indicate the existence of superhuman power, which filled primitive man with an almost religious awe and fear. The word 'stone' appears 337 times in the Bible as a noun and 30 times as an adjective.

Stone was particularly prized in the ancient world. It was considered propitious. It indicated prosperity and a change in fortune for the better. White

stones were used to mark happy and festive occasions. In the Bible, we read of a white stone on only one occasion, and that in the Book of Revelation, where Jesus Himself will give a white stone: "to those who prove victorious I will give some hidden manna and a white stone, with a new name written on it, known only to the person who receives it" (Revelation 2:17).

The Bishop saw St Michael

Stone plays an integral part in the story of the revelation of St Michael at Gargano. When, in 1656, the plague was decimating the population of Italy, a worried Bishop Alfonso Puccinelli entreated the help of St Michael the Archangel. In order to prevail on the Archangel for his swift intervention with the Lord, he placed into the hands of his statue the words of a prayer composed on behalf of all the town's inhabitants. The reply received on 22nd September at the bishop's palace in Monte Sant'Angelo was swift in coming. During his morning prayer, Bishop Alfonso first heard what sounded like an earthquake, after which, in a flash of dazzling light, he saw St Michael the Archangel. He was also 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). At the same time, St Michael assured him that whoever shall possess such a stone and keep it with devotion will be preserved from sickness. This promise proved true and all

who possessed the stones were soon freed from the fatal disease.

Many priests therefore invite the statue from Gargano into their parishes and communities. And so, St Michael the Archangel comes, and leaves us small stones from the heavenly grotto. This white stone is today our weapon, and a stone as a weapon against evil signifies Christ.

Jesus is the living stone

The Apostle Peter goes deeper and teaches us that Jesus is the living stone, chosen by God and precious to Him, so that, "as living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:4-5), with the assistance of St Michael the Archangel.

Please ask a priest to bless the white stone from the heavenly grotto at the Shrine of St Michael. All stones in the reliquary are fragile and should be handled with care. Only if the relic is ordered direct from the Grotto do the custodians of the Shrine at St Michael supply a small Certificate of Authentication to go with the white stones housed in the delicate reliquaries.

In most cases our offices in Canada, the USA and the UK send an Act of Consecration prayer to St Michael the Archangel with the exact same stone from the Sanctuary in Monte Sant'Angelo, Italy (FG).

Stones ordered direct from the Shrine in Monte Sant' Angelo can take some months to be processed depending on the volume of orders.

The value of the Scapular of St Michael

The very first scapular of St Michael the Archangel was introduced in the 19th century at the Church of St Eustace in Rome and belonged to the Brotherhood of St Michael the Archangel, established in Rome on 30th August 1878. Unlike most scapulars, rather than being rectangular in shape, it was made in the shape of a shield. One side is navy blue in colour, the other black, with these same two colours on the ribbons. Both ends of the scapular had a picture of St Michael the Archangel killing the dragon and the words 'Quis ut Deus'. Pope Pius IX gave this scapular his blessing, but the very first scapular that was formally approved was by Pope Leo XIII in 1880.

Today the scapular of St Michael consists of two layers of woollen cloth in the shape of a shield, hand-made by the Carmelite Sisters. When sewing each stitch, the sisters pray for each person who will receive the scapular. The material comes in two colours, black and navy blue. The black side has the image of St Michael from the shrine at Mont Sant'Angelo on Mount Gargano, the navy-blue side shows the image of Our Lady from Miejsce Piastowe, near Krosno, Poland (the motherhouse of the Michaelite Fathers).

Entrustment to St Michael

The scapular of St Michael the Archangel is an outward sign of

entrustment to St Michael and of belonging to the Michaelite family. It is worn in order to propagate the veneration of St Michael the Archangel. People who have accepted the scapular are called to serve Christ and His Church in the spirit of the Congregation of St Michael the Archangel, as seen in its mottoes of, 'Who is like to God?' and 'Temperance and Work'. The section worn on a person's back signifies an attitude of acceptance of God's Will in bearing the crosses and difficulties of life. The front section of the scapular, worn on the chest, reminds us that our hearts should love God and our neighbour and that we should attempt to free ourselves from earthly attachments, and, through the intercession of St Michael the Archangel, strive to attain eternal goods.

Wearing the scapular should remind us of our Christian duties and of the assurance of St Michael's intercession on our behalf. The scapular expresses our Christian faith that we will meet God in eternity, thanks to the intercession and protection of St Michael the Archangel.

The conditions of accepting the scapular are:

1. You should accept the scapular from the hands of an accredited priest or deacon.
2. You should wear it continually.
3. You should recite Pope Leo XIII's short prayer of exorcism daily.

What role does the scapular play?

1. The scapular is a sign of having chosen St Michael the Archangel as our particular protector in the fight against sin and temptation.
2. The scapular is the uniform of the angelic army. In the same way that we recognize a soldier, police officer or priest by their clothing, so we can also recognize the Brotherhood of the Scapular by the wearing of this sign.
3. The scapular as a garment and clothing is intended to protect the body. The scapular plays a similar role in the interior life: it protects us from every potential obstacle on the road to salvation, that is, from sin, from Satan and from hell.

The wearing of the scapular is a source of grace which assists us in making the sacrifices required to fight sin and to imitate Christ.

There is no impediment to small children receiving the scapular. It is advisable, however, that they should be of an age to be capable of understanding the basic truths of the Faith, preferably after having received their First Holy Communion.

Only a baptised person may wear the scapular. The scapular is an item blessed and approved by the Catholic Church so a person wearing it needs to belong to the same Church where the scapular is from. There should be cohesion and harmony between one's beliefs and religious items they wear. Those who wear crosses or medallions of St Michael or Our Lady are immediately identified as Christians. It should be the same with a scapular.

Fr **Rafał Sz wajca** CSMA
Marki, Near Warsaw, Poland



I met an angel in New York once

That angel took the time to correct and challenge me to see the beauty in every person and not just in a select few.

I am an Eastern Orthodox Christian Priest and one important part of our faith is making visits to holy places. Some holy places are especially unique because they offer the opportunity to say prayers to God at the grave of a holy person. In those special moments, we thank God for the life of the reposed person, and we ask that we too can aspire to live such an extraordinary life.

Some years back, I had the opportunity to visit the grave of a holy person in Jordanville, New York. This grave marked the resting place of the saintly person, Brother Jose

Munoz-Cortes, who was martyred in 1997. Sadly, I confess that I can become quite excited about visiting these places dedicated to extraordinary people.

When I approached the large cemetery, that summer morning in New York, to offer a prayer at Brother Jose's grave, I was overjoyed. I had wanted to visit his grave for some time. The grave was very easy to find as it was covered with flickering candles, folded papers containing prayers, and icons. I noticed a tall man sitting near the grave. He was dishevelled with long blond hair and ragged clothes.

He wore no shoes and he had a single backpack that overflowed with sandwiches. He had strikingly blue eyes. He resembled what I imagine Huckleberry Finn looked like.

As I approached the grave, I asked the stranger if it were okay for me to offer a few prayers. He gave a polite nod. As I did my prayers, I could see out of the corner of my eye that the stranger stared at me. He did not stare at me in a genteel way: rather, it was more like how an old coach stares at his prize athlete as he studies the athlete's every move.

After a short while I completed my prayers, crossed myself, and backed away from the graveside. Moved by the experience I looked around at all the other gravestones, most of which had names written in Russian. Maybe there was another saintly person buried in the cemetery? Surely, one visit to the grave of a holy person was not enough for the day. The strange man noticed I was looking around the cemetery and as he continued to stare at me, he asked, "Father, are you looking for something?" I replied by asking him if he knew whether there were any other holy people buried in the cemetery. He thought to himself for a few seconds and then he pointed at a grave in the distance and said, "Svetlana is buried over there... She is a saint." As I gathered myself to basically sprint over to Svetlana's grave, the strange man spoke up again and said, "That's the grave of Yuri over there. He was a holy person." My excitement is through the roof at this point. Three holy people in one cemetery: I had lucked out!

Again, he spoke up, "... and over there is Aleksandr... and there's Olga, and Dmitri, and over there,

Elena...”. He rattled off dozens of other Slovak names. I must have looked like a crossed-up squirrel at that point trying to figure how to zig-zag to all the graves. Then he calmly slowed his talking and said, “Father?” He said it in such a way that it beckoned me to look at him. Then he replied ever so poignantly, while staring at me with his deep eyes: “Father, there are probably a thousand saints buried here. I don’t think you’ll have the time to pray in front of all of their graves.” He then promptly grabbed his backpack and started walking away, very much shoeless.

I believe that stranger was an angel in disguise. He was a messenger sent to challenge me, or rather tutor me about how beauty and holiness does not reside just in the special saints of our faith. Rather, there is beauty, holiness, and the image of God in every person, if we choose to see it. The image of God is in every person no matter whether their grave has candles and written prayers on it. Maybe that image is covered up with lots of muck from the mistakes we have made, but that image is there at the core of who we truly are. What I learned that day from the messenger is that every person contains beauty and holiness within them. The most important question to us is whether we choose to open our eyes and see the beauty in every person around us who is endowed with the image of God within them.

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Jesus Christ the bearer of the water of life

A Christian reflection on the “New Age”

Part 1

Introduction

This article is built around the publication *Jesus Christ The Bearer Of The Water Of Life: A Christian reflection on the “New Age”*, the reference and weblink for which can be found at the end.

These reflections are offered primarily so that Catholics might be able to explain how the *New Age* movement differs from the Christian faith.

The reflection calls attention to the need to know and understand *New Age* as a cultural current; as well as the need for Catholics to have an understanding of authentic Catholic doctrine and spirituality in order to properly assess *New Age* themes.

Its purpose is also to encourage discernment by those who are looking for sound reference points for a life of greater fullness. It is indeed our conviction that through many of our contemporaries who are searching, we can discover a true thirst for God. As Pope John Paul II said to a group of bishops from the United States: “Pastors must honestly ask whether they have paid sufficient attention to the thirst of the human heart for the true ‘living water’

which only Christ our Redeemer can give” (cf. Jn. 4:7-13). Like him, we want to rely “on the perennial freshness of the Gospel message and its capacity to transform and renew those who accept it” (AAS 86/4, 330).

The following reflections are meant as a guide for Catholics involved in preaching the Gospel and teaching the faith at any level within the Church. The document guides those involved in pastoral work in their understanding and response to *New Age* spirituality, both illustrating the points where this spirituality contrasts with the Catholic faith and refuting the positions espoused by *New Age* thinkers in opposition to Christian faith.

New Age spirituality: an overview

Christians in many Western societies, and increasingly also in other parts of the world, frequently come into contact with different aspects of the phenomenon known as *New Age*. Many of them feel the need to understand how they can best approach something which is at once so alluring,

complex, elusive and, at times, disturbing. These reflections are an attempt to help Christians do two things:

- to identify elements of the developing *New Age* tradition;
- to indicate those elements which are inconsistent with the Christian revelation.

It would be unwise and untrue to say that everything connected with the *New Age* movement is good, or that everything about it is bad. Nevertheless, given the underlying vision of *New Age* religiosity, it is on the whole difficult to reconcile it with Christian doctrine and spirituality.

New Age is not a single, uniform movement, but rather a loose network of practitioners whose approach is to think globally but act locally. People who are part of the network do not necessarily know each other and rarely, if ever, meet. It is a syncretistic structure incorporating many diverse elements, allowing people to share interests or connections to very different degrees and on varying levels of commitment. Like the Civil Rights movement or the Peace Movement, *New Age* includes a bewildering array of people linked to the movement's main aims, but very diverse in the way they are involved and in their understanding of particular issues.

At the heart of *New Age* is the belief that the time for particular religions is over. To refer to it as a religion would run counter to its own self-understanding. However, it is quite accurate to place *New Age* in the broader context of esoteric religiousness, whose appeal continues to grow.

The pastoral effectiveness of the Church in the Third Millennium depends to a great extent on the preparation of effective communicators of the Gospel message. This reflection is a response to the difficulties

expressed by many in dealing with the very complex and elusive phenomenon known as *New Age*. The purpose of this contribution is to help Catholics find a key to understanding the basic principles behind *New Age* thinking, so that they can then make a Christian evaluation of the elements of *New Age* they encounter.

It is worth saying that many people dislike the term *New Age*, and some suggest that “alternative spirituality” may be more correct and less limiting. It is also true that many of the phenomena associated with *New Age* will probably not bear any particular label, but it is presumed, for the sake of brevity, that readers will recognise a phenomenon or set of phenomena that can justifiably at least be linked with the general cultural movement that is often known as *New Age*.

What is new about New Age?

Here is what is “new” about *New Age*. It is a “syncretism of esoteric and secular elements”. They link into a widely-held perception that the time is ripe for a fundamental change in individuals, in society and in the world. There are various expressions of the need for a shift:

- from Newtonian mechanistic physics to quantum physics;
- from modernity's exaltation of reason to an appreciation of feeling, emotion and experience (often described as a switch from ‘left brain’ *rational* thinking to ‘right brain’ *intuitive* thinking);
- from a dominance of masculinity and patriarchy to a celebration of femininity, in individuals and in society.

In these contexts, the term “paradigm shift” is often used. *New Age* is a witness to nothing less than a cultural revolution, a complex reaction to the dominant ideas and values in western culture, and yet its idealistic criticism is itself ironically typical of the culture it criticizes.

When there is a shift from one paradigm to another, it is a question of wholesale transformation of perspective rather than one of gradual development. It really is a revolution, and Thomas Kuhn, who popularised the term, emphasised that competing paradigms are incommensurable and cannot co-exist. So, the idea that a paradigm shift in the area of religion and spirituality is simply a new way of stating traditional beliefs misses the point.

What is actually going on is a radical change in world-view, which puts into question not only the content but also the fundamental interpretation of the former vision. Perhaps the clearest example of this, in terms of the relationship between *New Age* and Christianity, is the total recasting of the life and significance of Jesus Christ. It is impossible to reconcile these two visions.

Western culture is now imbued with a more general political and ecological awareness, and this whole cultural shift has had an enormous impact on people's life-styles. It is suggested by some that the *New Age* “movement” is precisely this major change to what is reckoned to be “a significantly better way of life”.

The challenge

What is indeed required of Christians is, first and foremost, a solid grounding in their faith. On this sound base, they can build a life



■ New Age zodiac signs

which responds positively to the invitation in the first letter of St Peter: “always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have. But give it with courtesy and respect and a clear conscience” (1 Peter 3, 15 f.).

New Age appeals to people imbued with the values of modern culture. Freedom, authenticity, self-reliance and the like are all held to be sacred. It appeals to those who have problems with patriarchy. It “does not demand any more faith or belief than going to the cinema” (Paul Helas); and yet it claims to satisfy people’s spiritual appetites. But here is a central question: just what is meant by spirituality in a *New Age* context? The answer is the key to unlocking some of the differences between the Christian tradition and much of what can be called *New Age*. Some versions of *New Age* harness the powers of nature and seek to communicate with another world to discover the fate of individuals, to help individuals tune in to the right frequency to make the most of themselves and

their circumstances. In most cases, it is completely fatalistic. Christianity, on the other hand, is an invitation to look outwards and beyond, to the “new Advent” of the God who calls us to live the dialogue of love (Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dominum et vivificantem* (18 May 1986), 53).

The Internet has become enormously influential, especially with younger people, but it is a volatile vehicle of misinformation on so many aspects of religion: not all that is labelled “Christian” or “Catholic” can be trusted to reflect the teachings of the Catholic Church and, at the same time, there is a remarkable expansion of *New Age* sources ranging from the serious to the ridiculous. People need, and have a right to, reliable information on the differences between Christianity and *New Age*.

Cultural Background

When one examines many *New Age* traditions, it soon becomes clear

that there is, in fact, little in the *New Age* that is new. Basically, *New Age* has found a remarkable level of acceptance because the world-view on which it was based was already widely accepted.

The ground was well prepared by the growth and spread of relativism, along with an antipathy or indifference towards the Christian faith. Furthermore, there has been a lively discussion about whether and in what sense *New Age* can be described as a postmodern phenomenon. The existence and fervour of *New Age* thinking and practice bear witness to the unquenchable longing of the human spirit for transcendence and religious meaning, which is not only a contemporary cultural phenomenon, but was evident in the ancient world, both Christian and pagan.

The New Age and Catholic Faith

Even if it can be admitted that *New Age* religiosity in some way responds to the legitimate spiritual longing of human nature, it must be acknowledged that its attempts to do so run counter to Christian revelation.

In Western culture in particular, the appeal of “alternative” approaches to spirituality is very strong. On the one hand, new forms of psychological affirmation of the individual have become very popular among Catholics, even in retreat-houses, seminaries and institutes of formation for religious.

At the same time there is increasing nostalgia and curiosity for the wisdom and ritual of long ago, which is one of the reasons for the remarkable growth in the popularity of esotericism and Gnosticism. Many

people are particularly attracted to what is known – correctly or otherwise – as “Celtic” spirituality or to the religions of ancient peoples. Books and courses on spirituality and ancient or Eastern religions are a booming business, and they are frequently labelled “*New Age*” for commercial purposes. But the links with those religions are not always clear. In fact, they are often denied.

An adequate Christian discernment of *New Age* thought and practice cannot fail to recognize that, like second and third century Gnosticism, it represents something of a compendium of positions that the Church has identified as heterodox. John Paul II warns with regard to the “return of ancient Gnostic ideas under the guise of the so-called *New Age*: We cannot delude ourselves that this will lead toward a renewal of religion. It is only a new way of practising Gnosticism – that attitude of the spirit that, in the name of a profound knowledge of God, results in distorting His Word and replacing it with purely human words.

Gnosticism never completely abandoned the realm of Christianity. Instead, it has always existed side by side with Christianity, sometimes taking the shape of a philosophical movement, but more often assuming the characteristics of a religion or a para-religion in distinct, if not declared, conflict with all that is essentially Christian” (John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, (Knopf) 1994, 90). An example of this can be seen in the enneagram, the nine-type tool for character analysis, which when used as a means of spiritual growth introduces an ambiguity in the doctrine and the life of the Christian faith.

A positive challenge

The appeal of *New Age* religiosity cannot be underestimated. When the understanding of the content of Christian faith is weak, some mistakenly hold that the Christian religion does not inspire a profound spirituality and so they seek elsewhere.

The success of *New Age* offers the Church a challenge. People feel the Christian religion no longer offers them – or perhaps never gave them – something they really need. The search which often leads people to the *New Age* is a genuine yearning: for a deeper spirituality, for something which will touch their hearts, and for a way of making sense of a confusing and often alienating world. Any problems there are with *New Age* are to be found in what it proposes as alternative answers to life’s questions. If the Church is not to be accused of being deaf to people’s longings, her members need to do two things: to root themselves ever more firmly in the fundamentals of their faith, and to understand the often-silent cry in people’s hearts, which leads them elsewhere if they are not satisfied by the Church. There is also a call in all of this to come closer to Jesus Christ and to be ready to follow Him, since He is the real way to happiness, the truth about God and the fullness of life for every man and woman who is prepared to respond to his love.

Conclusion to Part 1

This section provides some advice from the Pontifical Councils on *New Age* thinking.

People’s minds and hearts are already unusually open to reliable

information on the Christian understanding of time and salvation history. Emphasising what is lacking in other approaches should not be the main priority. It is more a question of constantly revisiting the sources of our own faith, so that we can offer a good, sound presentation of the Christian message. We can be proud of what we have been given on trust, so we need to resist the pressures of the dominant culture to bury these gifts (cf. Mt 25.24-30). One of the most useful tools available is the Catechism of the Catholic Church. There is also an immense heritage of ways to holiness in the lives of Christian men and women past and present. Where Christianity’s rich symbolism, and its artistic, aesthetical and musical traditions are unknown or have been forgotten, there is much work to be done for Christians themselves, and ultimately also for anyone searching for an experience or a greater awareness of God’s presence.

Dialogue between Christians and people attracted to the *New Age* will be more successful if it takes into account the appeal of what touches the emotions and symbolic language. If our task is to know, love and serve Jesus Christ, it is of paramount importance to start with a good knowledge of the Scriptures. But, most of all, coming to meet the Lord Jesus in prayer and in the sacraments, which are precisely the moments when our ordinary life is hallowed, is the surest way of making sense of the whole Christian message.

Taken from: *Jesus Christ The Bearer of The Water of Life: A Christian Reflection on the “New Age”*. Pontifical Council for Culture and Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, 2003. www.vatican.va

Some New Age ideas to be aware of

Appendix to Christian Reflection on the “New Age”

While it was stated in the above article ‘it would be unwise and untrue to say that everything connected with the New Age movement is good or that everything about it is bad’. It is, nevertheless, important to be aware of New Age ideas that can seem appealing but may be misleading for the Christian pilgrim.

The following formulations of some New Age ideas refer to the Spirit, Love, Wisdom and the divine, for example, but there is no mention of God or of Christ as the Creator and Redeemer of mankind. Therefore, Christians need to be not only familiar with these ideas but also to be critical in their interpretation of them in light of the Catholic Faith and Church teaching.”

William Bloom’s 1992 formulation of New Age quoted in Heelas, p. 225f:

- All life – all existence – is the manifestation of Spirit, of the Unknowable, of that supreme consciousness known by many different names in many different cultures.
- The purpose and dynamic of all existence is to bring Love, Wisdom, Enlightenment... into full manifestation.
- All religions are the expression of this same inner reality.
- All life, as we perceive it with the five human senses or with scientific instruments, is only the outer veil of an invisible, inner and causal reality.

- Similarly, human beings are twofold creatures – with: (i) an outer temporary personality; and (ii) a multi-dimensional inner being (soul or higher self).
- The outer personality is limited and tends towards love.
- The purpose of the incarnation of the inner being is to bring the vibrations of the outer personality into a resonance of love.
- All souls in incarnation are free to choose their own spiritual path.
- Our spiritual teachers are those whose souls are liberated from the need to incarnate and who express unconditional love, wisdom and enlightenment. Some of these great beings are well-known and have inspired the world religions. Some are unknown and work invisibly.
- All life, in its different forms and states, is interconnected energy – and this includes our deeds, feelings and thoughts. We, therefore, work with Spirit and these energies in co-creating our reality.
- Although held in the dynamic of cosmic love, we are jointly responsible for the state of ourselves, of our environment and of all life.
- During this period of time, the evolution of the planet and of humanity has reached a point when we are undergoing a fundamental spiritual change in our individual and mass consciousness. This is why we talk of a *New Age*. This new consciousness is the result of the increasingly successful incarnation of what some people call the energies of cosmic love. This new consciousness demonstrates itself in an instinctive understanding of the sacredness and, in particular, the interconnectedness of all existence.
- This new consciousness and this new understanding of the dynamic interdependence of all life mean that we are currently in the process of evolving a completely new planetary culture.

Heelas (p. 226) Jeremy Tarcher’s “Complementary Formulation”.

1. The world, including the human race, constitutes an expression of a higher, more comprehensive divine nature.
2. Hidden within each human being is a higher divine self, which is a manifestation of the higher, more comprehensive divine nature.
3. This higher nature can be awakened and can become the centre of the individual’s everyday life.
4. This awakening is the reason for the existence of each individual life.

David Spangler is quoted in *Actualité des religions* n° 8, Septembre 1999, p. 43, on the principal characteristics of the New Age vision, which is:

- holistic (globalising, because there is one single reality-energy);
- ecological (earth-Gaia is our mother; each of us is a neurone of earth’s central nervous system);
- androgynous (rainbow and Yin/Yang are both NA symbols, to do with the complementarity of contraries, esp. masculine and feminine);
- mystical (finding the sacred in everything, the most ordinary things);
- planetary (people must be at one and the same time anchored in their own culture and open to a universal dimension, capable of promoting love, compassion, peace and even the establishment of world government).

The above are just some of the formulations of New Age ideas. How they are expressed may give the impression that there is little difference between them and basic Christian teaching. Part 2 will give further consideration to this.

(Source: APPENDIX 7.1. Taken from: *Jesus Christ The Bearer of The Water of Life: A Christian Reflection on the “New Age”*. Pontifical Council for Culture and Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, 2003.)

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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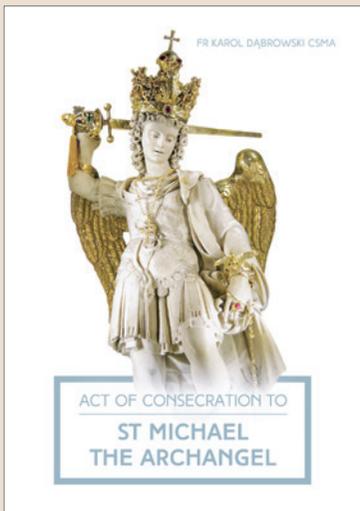
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 A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF ST MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

St Faustina and St Michael

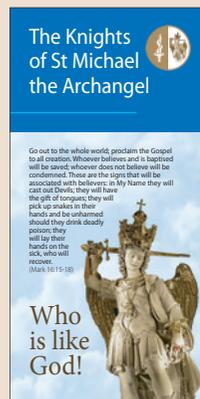
St Faustina is full of wonder, respect, reverence and admiration for St Michael the Archangel. The fundamental and only reason behind such an attitude is, as she is at pains to stress, the fact that he did the will of God. He is for her the angel resplendent in his wonder and boundless humility towards 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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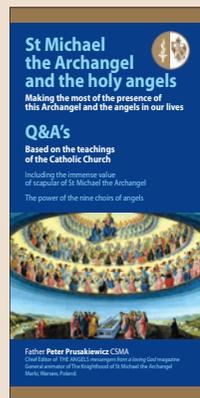
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Under the protection of St Michael the Archangel

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 egoism 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

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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 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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Chaplet of St Michael

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

A. *Amen*

Say the following prayer on the medal:

O God, come to my assistance.

O Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

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

(1 Our Father on the first large bead, 3 Hail Marys on the next three small beads)

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

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

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

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

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

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

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

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

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

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

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

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

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

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

9. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Angels, may the Lord grant us to be

Prayer of Pope Leo XIII

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

protected by them in this mortal life and conducted hereafter to eternal glory. Amen.

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

Recite on the next four beads:

1 Our Father in honour of St Michael

1 Our Father in honour of St Gabriel

1 Our Father in honour of St Raphael

1 Our Father in honour of our Guardian Angel

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

