

St. Michael

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[0 : 00] When we think of angels, we often envision such things as baby cherubs. You know, that rather weird image of a baby face with wings.

I remember watching certain cartoons as a youngster, seeing an angel on the shoulder of the cartoon character and the devil in the other.

The angel spoke in some very timid voice, encouraging one to choose their better nature, while the devil spoke in a lower, graspy voice, tempting one to give in to their own desires.

Today, angels have made a bit of a comeback. Much of New Age spirituality is rooted in a very warped view of angels.

And then we have those theologians at the funerals, telling us that our loved ones who died are now angels. So, are angels little freaky-looking baby creatures with wings?

[1 : 06] Are they sheepish spirits who speak in soft voices, encouraging us to do good? Are we all angels, or do we become angels when we die?

This morning on this feast for St. Michael and all angels, we're going to look at the truth, and we're going to learn the truth behind these created beings.

St. Michael's name means, Who is like God? Who is like God? In other words, Michael is the highest rank of these created angelic beings.

Yes, Christianity has a hierarchy. And Michael is the highest of the angelic realm. St. Michael, the archangel, is depicted with a sword or a spear.

He appears with his foot upon a dragon, representing the defeat of Satan. We read in Revelation chapter 20, verses 1 through 3, the following.

[2 : 10] Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.

And he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more.

St. Michael, the archangel, is not some sheepish figure in a white robe and a halo, as acting as some timid preacher. No, St. Michael is a warrior.

He's a warrior who fights against Satan and his legion of followers. St. Michael, the archangel, is the patron saint of military soldiers, police officers, and first responders and firefighters.

He is the guardian of the church. He is the one who leads the faithful into paradise after death. St. Michael is the highest of all angels, higher than the other three archangels, Raphael, Gabriel, and Uriel.

[3 : 33] The point is simply that there is a war that's being waged right now. And that war is for your soul. You are called to look with the eyes of faith to see that there is an unseen world beyond the veil of our external senses.

Today, many Western Europeans and Americans do not believe in such things. We think we're too advanced for such ideas. We only believe in what we see or what we experience.

We are agnostics to the angelic realm. Satan, demons, angels, and even God are often viewed as some primitive idea that has its roots in some superstitious and bygone era.

And friends, that's exactly what Satan wants you to believe. He is, by the way, the great deceiver. If he can convince you that all there is is what you see, what you touch, what you feel, he has you exactly where he wants you.

He wants you to believe that you are your own God. You answer to no one. And that you are your own source of knowledge and truth. He wants to destroy you in the same way that he fell from grace through pride and arrogance.

[5 : 12] He wants to convince you that you are nothing more than some empirical animal with no accountability beyond yourself. You are the captain of your own fate.

He wants you to believe that you're merely a machine with no inherent worth. And then eventually you just run out of energy, break down, and cease to exist.

The end. But behind the veil of what we see, behind the veil of what we sense, there is a war, an all-out war that is going on.

There are angels, archangels, saints, martyrs, and all who join us. That is the church militant, meaning all of us, living, baptized followers of Jesus.

These angels of the whole company of heaven aid us as we strive against evil through the discipline of prayer, seeking to live in obedience to our divine warrior king, Jesus the Christ.

[6 : 24] And although Satan seeks to deceive and eventually devour you, that's his goal for you, the good news is he is no match.

He is no match for God, and he is no match for St. Michael, the archangel. Our line of defense then is to believe and ask the Lord to strengthen us in times of doubt and spiritual distress.

In the words of our gospel text here that we heard in Matthew chapter 18, we are to pray that the Lord give us a humble and childlike faith, a total dependence on our God.

Those that come to their creator with humility and a childlike faith are those who will inherit the kingdom of God. We are to ask our guardian angel for help, praying such words as, angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here, ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide.

A prayer that we said with our kids every evening. Dear friends, take comfort in knowing that although the battle is hard and it seems as though everyone and everything is against us, the war has already been won.

[7 : 53] The war has already been won. Jesus has defeated sin, death, and the devil by way of his cross. St. Michael and all the angels help us now as we make our way through the battle and difficulties of this life.

And though we often feel abandoned, alone, alienated, in this day where Satan has taken hold of most of our once entrusted institutions, he has sown strife and dissension within our families, turning hearts away from Christ to be lovers of self.

We are called to fight. And to fight with courage. But our weapons are not the weapons of the world. Our weapons are those given to us by the Holy Spirit. We are to order our lives around the Holy Eucharist, receiving the body, soul, and divinity of our Lord.

And that is to be at the center of all that we do. We are to commit to the discipline and practice of daily prayer and the reading of Scripture in the context of that daily prayer.

[9 : 12] We are to be a repentant people constantly confessing our sins. We are to live selfless lives, seeking the good and the growth of others, encouraging one another as we see the day approaching.

And we are to stand against evil, following the examples of St. Michael and all the angels, which is not a life of sitting back and being armchair quarterback.

It's not a life of merely being passive spectators or timid and apathetic sheep. Instead, we are called to storm the gates of hell with the battle cry of the whole church proclaiming those words from Revelation 5, verse 13.

Blessing and honor and glory and power be to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever. Let us pray.

St. Michael, the archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the devil.

[10 : 29] May God rebuke him, we humbly pray. And do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls through the might and power of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.