

**Peacemaker blessed, may he banish
From us striving and hatred:
Archangel Michael (Hymn 282)**
“The Hymnal 1982,” Episcopal Church USA

Homily

Peter Menkin, Obl Cam OSB
Church of Our Saviour (Episcopal)
Mill Valley, CA USA
Wednesday Eucharist, September 30, 2009
Lesser Feasts and Fasts, 1994

Genesis 28: 10-17
Revelation 12: 7-12
John 1: 47-51
Psalm 103

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

Let us speak of angels, one in particular with who all are familiar as they are familiar with their Bible: Michael... Holy Archangel Michael: Prince of Angels, Prince of Light, Defeater of Satan, Helper of Mankind, Leader of Armies of Angels.

One prayer regarding Angels said for evening time reads:

*That your holy angels may lead us in paths of peace and goodwill
...we entreat you, O Lord.*

Angels are higher than man in the order of celestial beings, supernatural these spirits of God fight evil, for it is said Michael defeated Satan himself. Thank God.

One Episcopal sermon states of Angels: *Angel, of course, means messenger, and Archangel means first or highest messenger. The angels deliver messages and do God's bidding. According to Tradition, Michael is the archangel who battled Lucifer, the fifth archangel who began the first war in Heaven...*

[Grace Church in Providence, 14 September, 2008,

Preached by: The Rev. Rich Bardusch]

My Homily is a list of the wonderful attributes of Michael and angels in general. For example, Pope Leo XII prayed this prayer:

**Saint Michael, 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 power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all the other evil spirits who prowl
about the world
seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.**

Those devoted to angels offer to God in Christ a form of Christian life characterized by:

- Gratitude to God for having these heavenly spirits of sanctity and dignity aid man;
- A devotional attitude that lives in the constant presence of God's Holy Angels;
- That there is serenity and confidence granted us by this knowledge of angels when facing difficult situations;
- That the Lord guides and protects the faithful through the ministry of Holy Angels.

Who is so brave, noble, and mighty a warrior in heavenly things as Michael?

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world -- he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

-- Revelation 12:7-9 [RSV]

In matters celestial, who aids us as does Michael? It is said that at the time of death, Michael helps each of us cross over to the afterlife. He is a minister of God.

At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book. And

many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

--Daniel 12:1-3 [RSV]

Just speaking these wonderful words of promise is worthwhile.

Many people believe there is healing in angels, and when a stressful or negative experience causes pain, either physical or emotional pain, it's wonderful to call on the Archangel Michael. He is supreme helper in any experience that brings up fear. If you need an additional convincer of his ability to lead and give courage, know he was one of Joan of Arc's voices.

Great and heroic is Michael.

Tradition declares that Michael entered upon his role of defender at the time of the biblical patriarchs. The wonderful historic Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob tells us, it was Michael who rescued Abraham from the furnace into which he had been thrown by Nimrod, Michael who told Abraham that Lot had been taken captive, and Michael who protected Sarah from being defiled by Abimelech. He also announced to Sarah that she would bear a son, and he rescued Lot at the destruction of Sodom.

An amazing and mythical angel of power and might, we know that as messenger and helper of mankind, there are forces of good led by God's goodness. These celestial creatures of spirit have been in places of Biblical history Midrash of Hebrew scholarship says. Angels and Michael in particular are known to the Old Testament, as we see.

It is said that Michael prevented Isaac from being sacrificed by his father by substituting a ram in his place. Later Michael prevented Laban from harming Jacob According to one source, it was Michael who wrestled with Jacob and who afterward blessed him.

The midrash *Exodus Rabbah* holds that Michael exercised his function of advocate of Israel at the time of the Exodus also, when Satan (as an adversary) accused the Israelites of idolatry and declared that they were consequently deserving of death.

A wonderful statue of Archangel Michael stands at an entrance of England's Coventry Cathedral. Dramatic and bold, magnificent, this statue proclaims the victory of the Church, the victory of good over evil, the vanquishing of Satan. Coventry Cathedral was ruined in the Second World War, and it is fitting that the Archangel Michael as bold leader of Heaven's Angels did aid in the defeat of the Axis Powers by the Allies. That he

is helpfully responsible for the rebuilding of the Cathedral and instrumental in the preservation of the Church.

My favorite quote from the Bible about Michael is this one:

Once when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing before him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went to him and said to him, 'Are you one of us, or one of our adversaries?' He replied, 'neither; but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.' And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped, and he said to him, 'What do you command your servant, my lord?' The commander of the army of the Lord said to Joshua, 'Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy.' And Joshua did so.

--Joshua 5:13-15 [NRSV]

But of course, our Gospel tells us from John there is an angel quality to the Apostles, but more that at the end angels will appear.

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you," you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

--John 1: 47-51

I believe Angels help us to believe, not because we believe in angels, but because angels believe in us. It is angelic to have faith. It is celestial to hold the heavens and God in Christ in ones heart. It is angelic to turn towards the good, to have mercy, to believe. It is angelic to hold as spirit the awesome magnificence of life and our creator.

*Glorify the Lord, O spirits and souls of the righteous,
praise him and highly exalt him for ever...*

*Let us glorify the Lord: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
praise him and highly exalt him for ever.*

*In the firmament of his power, glorify the Lord,
praise him and highly exalt him for ever.*

Amen.