



A Catholic Magazine on the Holy Angels | Vol 7 • issue 4 • 2016 | £ 2,00 € 2,50 \$ 5,00 | ISSN 2081-5077

# The Angels

Messengers from a loving God



**Why pray  
to St Michael?**

**Angels as children**

**Mercy in practice**

**The Far East angels**

**The greatest treasure - the Eucharist**



## The devotion to the angels lead us to God. By adoring God we please the angels and we please the angels when we pray.

**T**he angels are pure spirits and created by God. Devotion to the angels leads us to God. Angels who are pure spirits fight for us constantly. A person who is dying, even if he or she is far away from God, the angels fight for them right up until the end.

Our guardian angel does not want us to commit sin and can lead us to the confessional. It's a very personal relationship with our guardian angel. They need to familiarise and acquire knowledge about us as a person. If a mother or father has a child for example, it takes a while to get to know them and it is the same with the angels, they know our weakest points and our strongest points.

When we are weak the fallen angels have an opportunity to tempt us.

We should be aware that we have a guardian angel and each of them is different and individual. My guardian angel would be different to yours, it is true to say they are as close to us as a twin brother or sister would be, it is a very close personal relationship. As their name suggests guardian angels are our real guardians, messengers from a loving God, fostering our

desires, wanting to lead us to heaven, to the Father's home.

The angels minister to us all the time, inspiring us to pray and protecting us, but we may not always be aware of this.

We ask Jesus and St Michael the Archangel to help us and give us strength to be holy and good in all that we do. May our guardian angel help us to have a good conscience and always do the right thing. Jesus Christ is ready once again to be crucified and to die for you and me. You can always turn to Him. He will give you a wonderful welcome because you are his beloved. Your place is in His heart. Only this can make you fully and endlessly happy.

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. Please let others know about this magazine and help us to distribute it all over the world and view our new website [www.stmichaelthearchangel.info](http://www.stmichaelthearchangel.info).

God bless you.

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

## The Angels

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# Why pray to St Michael?

The prayer to St Michael the Archangel, written personally by Pope Leo XIII and said after every Holy Mass, was removed as a result of the reform of the liturgy in 1969. The name of St Michael was also removed from the 'Confiteor' at the beginning of the Mass.

If we examine the events of the 1960s in both the Church and the world, it would seem that the removal of this prayer from the liturgy was somewhat premature and that insufficient attention was paid to its necessity.

## The road to hell is paved with good intentions

Industrial development following the Second World War had, in many countries, resulted in the advent of prosperity and an increase in consumer culture. This was evident throughout the world in the 1960s, and yet, it had not entirely eliminated poverty. Young people, who had not personally experienced the privations of war and did not adhere to the values of their parents' generation, increasingly accepted the availability of such previously unknown luxury as the norm. They



■ St Michael by Guido Reni, 1636, held in Santa Maria della Concezione dei Cappuccini church, Rome

increasingly came to reject everything which characterized adult society and began to make their own rules. This was the era of counter-cultural and protest movements all over the world, beginning in the United States and Mexico, which, by 1968, had spread to most of Western Europe. The most prominent and influential of these had been in Paris. The student population was generally the most active in these new movements. Fascinated by left-wing ideologies, they rejected the standards of traditional society and demanded increased freedoms. Their demands encompassed political, economic, social, religious and cultural life. Examples include protests against war in Vietnam, against a conservative government in France, struggles for 'Socialism with a human face' in Poland and Czechoslovakia and environmentalism. It saw the beginnings of 'hippies', feminism, New Age beliefs, demands for lesbian and gay rights, the sexual revolution, free love, the increased social acceptability of cohabitation outside marriage, same-sex relationships, demands for the legalization of abortion and divorce and the propagation of contraception and pornography. Jeans and mini-skirts were the rage. Terrorist organizations arose, such as the 'Red Brigades' a left-wing paramilitary organization, in Italy.

Many of these movements had some good intentions, but they caused much that was harmful, particularly as regards social morality, the results of which we suffer from today. Marriage and the family is now under threat. Divorce was legalized in Canada (1968), Italy (1970), as was abortion in Great Britain (1967), Canada (1969), Finland (1970), the USA and Denmark (1973). The following years saw a landslide in terms of such legislation in many other countries.

Theologians appeared within the Church, proclaiming doctrines incompatible with traditional orthodoxy (such as H. Küng or E. Schillebeeckx). In 1966, the bishops in Holland published a catechism which left out teaching about the angels and the fallen angels. A schism in the Church threatened as a result of Bishop Lefebvre, an opponent of the reforms of Second Vatican Council, freedom of religion and ecumenism, when he set up a traditionalist seminary in Ecône, Switzerland (1970), the Society of St Pius X (1979), finally leading to schism, when, in 1988, he ordained bishops without permission from the Holy See.

## The sulphureous fumes of Satan

Blessed Paul VI, whose pontificate was described as one of 'difficult solutions', reacted to this situation in a speech on 29th June 1972, in which he said: "We get the impression that the sulphureous fumes of Satan have, through some gap, entered the Church of God. These show themselves through doubt and uncertainty, questioning, unease, disquiet and controversy. There is a lack of trust in Holy Church, while, on the other hand, any lay 'prophet' in the world, speaking through the press or as a representative of any social movement and proposing 'real life' solutions, is immediately believed! Nobody considers the fact that we (in the Church) already possess the solutions to these problems! We have already conquered doubt. This consciousness has entered by means of the window which is only open to the light. Knowledge and learning, whose aim should be to reveal the

truth, has actually caused this criticism and doubt. Knowledge should not separate us from God, but should teach us to seek and glorify Him all the more. Scholars set themselves the most painful questions, hang their heads and finally announce: 'I know nothing, we know nothing and we are incapable of knowing anything'. Learning becomes a source of confusion and even of absurd contradiction. Progress is worshipped and set on a pedestal, only to be immediately destroyed by radical revolution, in order to contradict achievements and return to primitivism, despite the modern world's recent glorification of progress. A similar climate of uncertainty is also present within the Church. It seemed that the sun would shine on the Church after the Council. Instead of sun we have cloudy weather, storms, darkness, searching and uncertainty. We talk of ecumenism, while daily creating yet more divisions. Instead of filling-in chasms, we create them. How could all of this have happened? We think that it has been caused by an enemy power. The name of this mysterious entity is Satan, of whom St Peter speaks in his letter (1 Peter 5:8-9). How often does Christ mention this enemy of mankind in the Gospels! We believe in something (or somebody) supernatural, who comes into the world in order to create confusion and complication, to ruin the ecumenical fruits of the Council, halt the joy of the Church in which it would become fully aware of and come to realise its true mission. This is why, today more than ever, we wish, in this present situation to fulfil the mission which Christ entrusted to St Peter, to strengthen his brothers in the faith."

Pope Paul's speech astonished and shocked the media, which considered the problem of Satan as a relic of





■ Pope Leo XIII, who wrote a prayer to St Michael the Archangel after a vision of angelic hosts fighting evil spirits in 1884

medieval times, now eliminated from human consciousness. Undeterred by media criticism, the Pope returned to the problem of the existence and activity of Satan in the world during a general audience on 15th November 1972. He then posed the question: "What are the greatest needs of the Church of today?", to which he answered: "One of the greatest needs of the Church is its protection against the evil which we call Satan, the Demon."

## The demon is still with us...

St John Paul II, on his visit to the shrine of St Michael the Archangel on Mount Gargano on 24th May 1987, reminded people of the role

of St Michael the Archangel within the Church and the wider world. He said that he had come to Gargano "in order to honour and to beg St Michael the Archangel to guard and protect Holy Church at a time when it is difficult to give authentic and uncompromising Christian witness. He is represented in the Bible as the great warrior fighting the Dragon, leader of the Demons. In the Book of Revelation, we read: 'A war broke out in heaven' (12:7). This war against the Demon, led by St Michael, continues today, as the Demon is still alive and active in the world. The person of St Michael the Archangel, continually honoured in both the Western and Eastern Church, summons us to battle. We all remember the prayer, recited in years past at the

end of the Holy Mass: *Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in the day of battle....*" Pope John Paul II ended his homily by reciting this prayer in the name of the whole Church.

On 24th April 1994, during the Regina Coeli, St John Paul II again reminded people of the prayer to St Michael and encouraged them to say it. He said: "Although we no longer say this prayer at the end of the Eucharistic celebration, I would invite you all not to forget to say it, in order to obtain help in the battle against the powers of darkness and the spirit of this world."

On 29th September 2014, Pope Francis concluded that "Satan always attempts to ruin man out of jealousy. Satan tries to destroy humanity, all of us, the many plans to dehumanize us are his work, because he hates man. Humanist solutions (to present-day questions), directed against man, are part of his (Satan's) plans of destruction directed against humanity itself and against God." The Pope encourages us to pray to the Archangels Michael, Raphael and Gabriel and also to recite "the beautiful prayer to the Archangel Michael, asking his continued intervention to guard the greatest mystery which mankind possesses: that the Word became flesh. That He died and rose again. That is our most precious treasure. Let Michael continue to fight in its defence."

Blessed Bronisław Markiewicz also encourages us to recite the prayer to the Archangel: "Let us stand with St Michael, whose hand holds the victorious banner of the Cross of Christ, and let us remember that, fighting under this banner, we will successfully overcome all the snares and attacks of the evil one."

Fr Edward Data CSMA, Poland

# Angels of the Far East

**“Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you? And the King will answer, “I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me” (Matthew 25: 37-40).**



■ Blaise Pascal, portrait, painter unknown

**T**hrough the life of Japanese doctor, Paul Takashi Nagai (1908-1951), God demonstrated what the love of one person who had given himself entirely to God can accomplish for all of suffering humanity.

## A hero's funeral

Paul Takashi Nagai, Rector of the faculty of Radiology at the University of Nagasaki in Japan, died on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 1951. In one hand he held a rosary sent to him by the Pope, and in the other, a crucifix given to him by his son. The funeral took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May. This is the account given by one of the people who attended it: “In the same way as a heart suddenly stops beating, so life in Nagasaki also stopped for a minute on the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 1951. All the trams, cars, bicycles stopped, as also did all work in factories, offices, shops and in the fields. People remained motionless

wherever the horrifying sound of the siren reached their ears. Ships standing in port also sounded their sirens. At the appointed time, the bells of all Catholic and Protestant churches and of Buddhist temples rang out, not only in Nagasaki, but in all the towns and villages of Japan. In the course of those 60 seconds, the whole of Japan experienced a painful reminder of the atom bombs which hit Japan on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1945, killing tens of thousands, razing thousands of buildings to the ground and devastating the environment. The funeral of Paul Takashi Nagai, a national hero, was also a way of remembering and honouring all of these victims.”

## “I have to listen to my heart”

Who was this man whose death was mourned by the whole of Japan? He was born in 1908 in Izumu near Hiroshima. His father had been a

well-respected doctor. His son was fascinated with his father and also chose to study medicine at the University of Nagasaki. The students tended towards a materialistic approach to life, an attitude which the 20 year-old Takashi shared. This soon changed, however, as a result of time spent with his dying mother. She was unable to speak, following a stroke. He remembered her pleading gaze to the end of his life, as it said to him that: “Human life is not just animated nature, but also an immortal spirit”. His mother's gaze was for him a source of spiritual inspiration. A few years later, Paul wrote: “My mother's eyes assured me that the human spirit continues to live after death. This was more than just intuition, but a spiritual certainty which led to my conversion: the human soul does exist!”

Any residual doubts were resolved in his reading the “Pensées” of the French mathematician and philosopher, Blaise Pascal, to which he often turned. He was particularly touched



by the statement that: “Man is only a reed, the most feeble thing in nature, but he is a thinking reed.” In other words, man is a very frail and delicate creature but one which is capable of thinking. By thinking, Pascal reaches God! This argument made a very strong and convincing impact on the young medical student. Pascal, a great scholar and thinker, nevertheless believed in God! Pascal was well able to use his brain! This meant that faith was far from being a resort of the ignorant, but was instead a very serious matter! After his mother’s funeral, Takashi returned to Nagasaki to continue his studies. In the depth of his grief, he again turned to the “Pensées” and read: “The heart has its reasons, which are not known to the mind: we can see thousands of examples of this”; “It is the heart, rather than the reason, which is aware of God. That is faith: God felt by the heart”. Takashi understood that the human reason was not sufficient in order to reach God. God is more than a concept – he is a living person! “I must listen to my heart” he concluded.

## “I wish to see and Jesus is the light!”

The process of Takashi’s conversion reached a new stage when he met Midori Moriyama, a young woman and a practising Catholic. The decision to become baptised was not easy. Takashi realised that conversion to Christianity could jeopardise his professional career. As he came to know and understand the truths of the Faith, he realised that his heart was telling him that this was a decision which he had to take. Once

again he turned to Pascal’s “Pensées”, where he read the words: “There is sufficient light for those who wish to see but there is also sufficient darkness for those who do not wish to see!”. He closed the book and said decidedly: “I wish to see! Jesus is the light! I wish to become baptised!”

Takashi was baptised in 1934, at the age of twenty-six, taking as his baptismal name, Paul, in honour of the Japanese martyr, St Paul Miki, who had been crucified in Nagasaki in the year 1597. Midori was overjoyed! He once confided to her: “You know that I am specialising in radiology, which is a new and potentially dangerous field. Some of my friends and colleagues already suffer from cancers and some have died. I am aware that the same may happen to me. Midori, are you ready to take me as your husband, in spite of the risk?” They were married soon after. Their faith so filled their hearts that their love became ever purer and more beautiful. It grew yet more with the arrival of their son, Makoto, and their daughter, Kayano.

## “I wish to continue serving!”

Their happiness and tranquillity, however, was short-lived. In 1937, war between Japan and China broke out and Doctor Paul Takashi was called up to serve in the army medical corps. He returned three years later, but an even worse experience awaited him when, on 8 December 1941, Japan entered the Second World War. That day, Paul confided to his wife: “Should war encroach on Japanese territory, Nagasaki will be an ideal target, given the huge

munitions factory and army base only a kilometre from the city.”

War did come to Nagasaki. There was now a shortage of everything. Work, particularly for surgeons and radiologists, doubled if not trebled. Paul Takashi did not spare himself. In June 1945, he was found to be suffering from leukaemia. On learning this, his prayer was one of trust: “O my God! My life is in your hands! For myself, I wish to continue serving until my last day, as it is only love which counts and which will last!” He was only saddened by the thought of having to tell his wife and did not know how. After supper that evening, while praying before their little altar at home, he could stand it no longer and burst into tears. Midori understood that something very serious had happened. Paul acknowledged the whole truth to her, to which she replied, with astounding courage: “Before we even got married, we



■ Dr Takashi Nagai, picture taken in 1946 during mourning for his wife

promised one another that we would offer our lives to the glory of God: and that glory is love itself. You have given everything and have sown only love for others. I love you and will go on loving you for this very reason.”

On the following day, Paul forgot to take his ‘o-bento’, his light lunch which he usually took to work with him, and returned to get it. Coming home, he met an unusual sight which moved him deeply – Midori was lying on the floor in the shape of a cross before their little altar, crying like a child! He understood. She had hidden her own pain from him in order not to add to his pain and now, when she was alone, opened her heart to God. Takashi told her: “You are so incredible, Midori! I am not worthy of such a wife!” Drying her tears, Midori calmly replied: “Paul, I also do not deserve such a wonderful husband as you!”

## Hell on earth

On the evening of 6 August 1945 news spread that a horrific American bomb, causing unprecedented devastation, had hit Hiroshima. Tens of thousands were killed with twice as many people injured. Houses had simply been cremated. Nobody in Japan then knew what kind of bomb it had been. Paul and Midori Takashi decided to send their children away to relatives in the country, far from Nagasaki. Their daughter was barely three years old and their son, ten. Having taken the children to the country, on 8<sup>th</sup> August Midori returned to Nagasaki to be with her husband, who continued to work in the hospital, in spite of his illness. And so the “apocalyptic” day for Nagasaki arrived.



■ The mushroom cloud from the atomic explosion over Nagasaki at 11:02 a.m., August 9, 1945

On 9<sup>th</sup> August, at precisely 11:00 am. an American B-29 bomber exploded an atomic bomb over the city. Within a few seconds almost the entire city of twenty thousand inhabitants lay in ruins. Those people who did survive wandered among the ruins with horrific burns, burnt hair and clothes, with a stupefied gaze and screams of utter despair. It was almost noon, but the sky was dark, as if it were sunset. The people roaming the ruins resembled horrific spectres. Any people that could, ran in the direction of the hospital. Many died

on the way. A huge number of people seeking help had gathered in front of the hospital. The hospital had itself suffered 80% damage. Everywhere were heard dreadful cries of: “Mizu! Mizu! Water! Water!”

At the time of the explosion Dr Takashi had been in the hospital. The doctors and nurses who survived worked non-stop for two whole days and nights to bring what help they could to the wounded. He did not find his wife among the wounded. He was later to find her lying in the shape of a cross at the stop where



# The Pope's message

their little household altar had been. He found a melted piece of her rosary. He knelt, crying over her body. He prayed for a long time, remembering the happy moments of their life as a family, her goodness, gentleness, as if he was hearing her voice saying to him: "I love you for the fact that you live by love of your neighbour, as Jesus Christ has taught you!" Their children survived.

Paul dedicated the last six years of his life to the service of the sick and suffering as well as working for world peace. He was known as the "Gandhi of Nagasaki". He died at the age of forty-three. Looking at the crucifix on the wall, he often would repeat the words: "Having my Cross on the wall I need nothing else. When I pray, I feel like the richest man on earth."

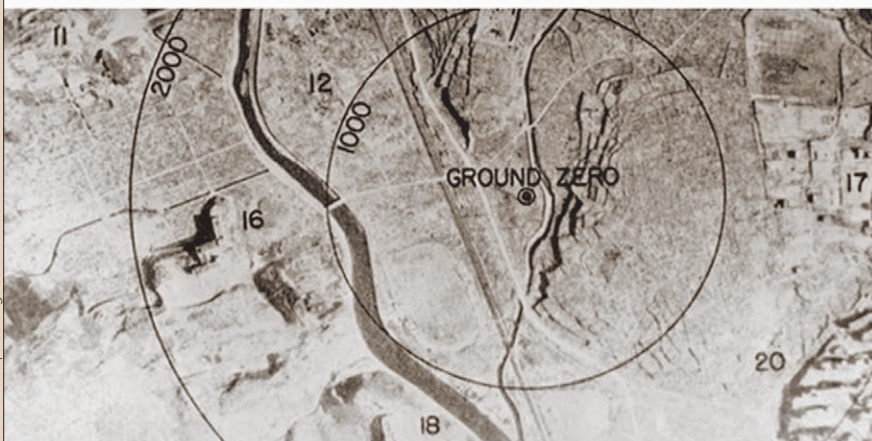
A hymn to St Michael the Archangel by Fr B Slawinski CSMA, speaks very succinctly of evil in the world, the root cause of which is Satan and the evil spirits. *See how he rages, for time is short/ Seducing souls, the Church he wishes to crush/ He sends the whole world into the conflagration of war/ Wishing to overturn God's power over the world.* Much also depends on us to prevent Satan's plans coming to fruition. People such as Paul Takashi and his wife, Midori, effectively opposed him.

*In honour of the memory of all the victims of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on the 70th anniversary of the bombings.*

Fr Henryk Skoczylas CSMA



*In a ceremony held in the Vatican Gardens on Friday, July 4, 2013 Pope Francis with Emeritus Pope Benedict by his side consecrated the Vatican City to St Michael the Archangel. The Pope suggested 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 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.*



■ Nagasaki before and after bombing



# Proclaiming Divine Mercy

## Mercy in practice



**Society can become ever more human only if we introduce into the many-sided setting of interpersonal and social relationships, not merely justice, but also that ‘merciful love’ which constitutes the messianic message of the Gospel.**

Society can become “ever more human” only when we introduce into all the mutual relationships which form its moral aspect the moment of forgiveness, which is so much of the essence of the Gospel. Forgiveness demonstrates the presence in the world of the love which is more powerful than sin. Forgiveness is also the fundamental condition for reconciliation, not only in the relationship of God with man, but also

in relationships between people. A world from which forgiveness was eliminated would be nothing but a world of cold and unfeeling justice, in the name of which each person would claim his or her own rights vis-à-vis others; the various kinds of selfishness latent in man would transform life and human society into a system of oppression of the weak by the strong, or into an arena of permanent strife between one group and another.

For this reason, the Church must consider it one of her principal duties at every stage of history and especially in our modern age to proclaim and to introduce into life the mystery of mercy, supremely revealed in Jesus Christ. Not only for the Church herself as the community of believers but also in a certain sense for all humanity, this mystery is the source of a life different from the life which can be built by man, who is exposed to the oppressive forces of the threefold concupiscence active within him. It is precisely in the name of this mystery that Christ teaches us to forgive always. How often we repeat the words of the prayer which He Himself taught us, asking “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”, which means those who are guilty of something in our regard. It is indeed difficult to express the profound value of the attitude which these words describe and inculcate. How many things these words say to every individual about others and also about himself. The consciousness of being trespassers against each other goes hand in hand with the call to fraternal solidarity, which St Paul expressed in his concise exhortation to



■ The Good Samaritan by Pelegrín Clavé y Roqué, 1838



“forbear one another in love.” What a lesson of humility is to be found here with regard to man, with regard both to one’s neighbour and to oneself. What a school of good will for daily living, in the various conditions of our existence. If we were to ignore this lesson, what would remain of any “humanist” program of life and education?

Christ emphasizes so insistently the need to forgive others that when Peter asked Him how many times he should forgive his neighbour He answered with the symbolic number of “seventy times seven,” meaning that he must be able to forgive everyone every time. It is obvious that such a generous requirement of forgiveness does not cancel out the objective requirements of justice. Properly understood, justice constitutes, so to speak, the goal of forgiveness. In no passage of the Gospel message does forgiveness, or mercy as its source, mean indulgence towards evil, towards scandals, towards injury or insult. In any case, reparation for evil and scandal, compensation for injury, and satisfaction for insult are conditions for forgiveness.

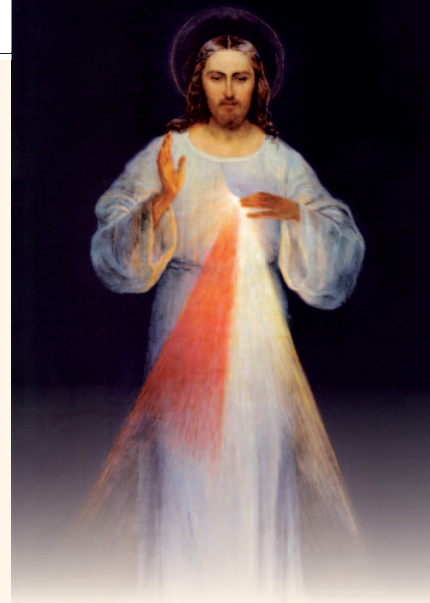
Thus the fundamental structure of justice always enters into the sphere of mercy. Mercy, however, has the power to confer on justice a new content, which is expressed most simply and fully in forgiveness. Forgiveness, in fact, shows that, over and above the process of ‘compensation’ and ‘truce’ which is specific to justice, love is necessary, so that man may affirm himself as man. Fulfilment of the conditions of justice is especially indispensable in order that love may reveal its own nature. In analysing the parable of the prodigal son, we have already

called attention to the fact that he who forgives and he who is forgiven encounter one another at an essential point, namely the dignity or essential value of the person, a point which cannot be lost and the affirmation of which, or its rediscovery, is a source of the greatest joy.

The Church rightly considers it her duty and the purpose of her mission to guard the authenticity of forgiveness, both in life and behaviour and in educational and pastoral work. She protects it simply by guarding its source, which is the mystery of the mercy of God Himself as revealed in Jesus Christ.

The basis of the Church’s mission, in all the spheres spoken of in the numerous pronouncements of the most recent Council and in the centuries old experience of the apostolate, is none other than “drawing from the wells of the Saviour.” this is what provides many guidelines for the mission of the Church in the lives of individual Christians, of individual communities, and also of the whole People of God. This “drawing from the wells of the Saviour” can be done only in the spirit of that poverty to which we are called by the words and example of the Lord: “You received without pay, give without pay.” Thus, in all the ways of the Church’s life and ministry through the evangelical poverty of her ministers and stewards and of the whole people which bears witness to “the mighty works” of its Lord the God who is “rich in mercy” has been made still more clearly manifest.

Taken from **www.vatican.va**  
Encyclical *Dives In Misericordia*  
Pope John Paul II  
13<sup>th</sup> November 1980



## Divine Mercy Pilgrimage

**Saints of the Divine Mercy  
– St Faustina, St John Paul II**

**12th Divine Mercy Pilgrimage  
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Father Peter Prusakiewicz CSMA**

**Friday 30<sup>th</sup> June  
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- Shrine of Our Black Madonna in Czestochowa
- The Old Town of Krakow
- The concentration camp in Auschwitz
- The salt mine in Wieliczka

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# The Eucharist — treasure above all treasures

**Complete participation in the Sunday (and not only the Sunday) Eucharist is as natural to a Catholic as eating or drinking. It is also true that activities which are undertaken so naturally can sometimes simply become habitual, so that we forget to reflect on their significance. Every once in a while it is worth setting ourselves some questions as to their true meaning.**

## **What is the Eucharist?**

It is a sacrament, which means that it was established by Jesus as a visible sign of His presence and activity. It is the greatest and holiest thing on earth and the greatest treasure.

## **Why do people not know about this?**

This is because they are uninterested in true treasures. Today, the greatest treasure is money and that in which it can be invested. As people do not know the significance of the Eucharist, they do not see the point of going to church. They often do this out of a sense of duty and of fear that they would otherwise need to confess this as a mortal sin. Not many people know why they actually go. They treat the Eucharist as a ritual, an important part of their Sunday and not as a personal encounter with Jesus.

We should go to church to obtain the greatest of treasures, which is Christ Jesus. After Communion, we leave the church with Him, in order

to undertake the work which Our Heavenly Father has commissioned us.

And so I answer the question by saying that people don't know because they don't want to know.

## **What does it mean to say that "they don't want to know"?**

In the past baptised people could already be divided into those who knew and those who didn't. Today we are dealing with an entirely new phenomenon, whereby people can be divided into three categories. The first are those who know. The second are those who don't know. The third are those who don't want to know. About 5% of people fall into the first two categories, while 90% belong to those who don't want to know. This is a new phenomenon. If people "don't want to know", God has nothing to say to them. Young people waste their time during R.E. and don't bother to pick up and read any books or magazines which will tell them about the treasures about which they don't want to hear.

## **But why don't they?**

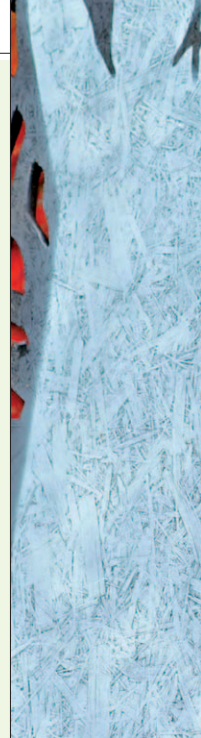
Because discovering treasures would entail making the effort to acquire them and giving up those things which they do value.

## **So then what can we do for them to learn to value these treasures?**

St Augustine put this point perfectly in his "Confessions". He did not want to do so and therefore put off his encounter with God till tomorrow. At a certain point in time, he discovered his mistake and so his "I don't want" became "I do want". That was the hour of his conversion. That is what conversion means. You must want to meet with God. On our part, we can only ask God to grant this grace to those whom we love.

## **Should we therefore not expect from children and young people that they go to church?**

"Prayer by force is not pleasing to God". We should go to church, but young people should see what we







gain from doing so. If their parents come out of church joyful and with greater love for their children and the world around them, then young people's attitudes will begin to change from "I don't want" to "I do want to go to church". They need to learn by example, what we get out of going to church.

### **What signs can we look for to discern the extent to which a person does treasure the Eucharist?**

Such a sign is the distance and veneration which they have for it. It is holy and only he who is without sin can approach it. In the Early Church, just before Communion, the priest would say "The Holy is holy. Who is holy may approach. Who is not should be converted".

The more people clamour to receive Holy Communion, the less they understand it. He who does not live in sin has the right to receive Holy Communion. A person loses this right by committing mortal sin. If people realised what Holy Communion truly is, they would not fight for the right for those who live in

sin to be given the right to receive it. It is not the law of the Church which decides this, but God. Sacrilege is a serious sin and he who lives in sin and takes Communion commits it. Conversations on the subject of the right to receive Holy Communion should begin by recalling revealed teachings on the subject of sin.

### **How should this be addressed?**

We need to get to know Jesus by meeting Him in the Gospels. The person who meets Him begins to listen more carefully to what He says and nourishes himself by His Word. The Gospel begins to draw him in and Jesus becomes his/her Teacher, his Master and Friend. Without such an encounter, there is no possibility of discovering the richness of the Eucharist. It requires time to mature sufficiently to open one's eyes to this treasure.

Jesus is hidden in the form of bread. It is not worth going to church in order simply to consume a wafer. You can just as easily buy one and eat it at home. But if Jesus Himself gives us this wafer and says: "This is

My Body" it then becomes a treasure above all treasures, as it encloses Jesus Himself. Bread is only the form by which He is hidden.

We have to truly find ourselves in the Upper Room, as every Holy Mass is its' re-enactment and presence. We need to get to know the atmosphere in which the Eucharist was established. It occurred immediately prior to Jesus' arrest and murder. We need to be able to encounter Him when He subsumes his own Will to that of His Father. Jesus did not wish to drink from the cup of suffering and asked that it pass from Him. However, He valued the Will of the Father above His Own Will, His "I want" and drank this cup. The Eucharist is this chalice.

### **Can you outline the mystery of the Eucharist in more detail?**

That is not possible in so short an interview as this. But I would encourage people to seek answers to the question of the great treasure which is the Eucharist. As your magazines "Who is like God" and "The Angels" are addressed to believers, they need to contain such words. We need to remember, however, that the percentage of people seeking the Truth is very small and that those who do not wish to get to know it, will never encounter it.

We live in a world built upon the idea of freedom, understood and encapsulated in the words "I don't want". The Truth of the Gospel is open only to those who do "want". Good will is the energy contained in the words of the person who says "I want" to that which God asks of them.

Professor father **Edward Staniek** was speaking to **Fr Piotr Prusakiewicz** CSMA. In co-operation with **Karol Wojteczek**

# I said that I knew Him

**“God is light; there is no darkness in him at all. If we say that we are in union with God while we are living in the darkness, we are lying because we are not living in the light” (1 John 1:5-6).**

**H**ow often do we consider it better not to know the truth? We think it better to put absolute trust in God’s infinite mercy and hope that all will turn out well. How difficult do we find it to accept God’s will, even if the punishment for our transgressions is death? We prefer to use our ignorance of God’s Law, reliance on Divine Mercy and many other worldly reasons for doing as we wish, in order to justify and excuse our choices and behaviour. Living by the standards of this world, we avoid asking questions which might shatter the reality we have created for ourselves. Comfortably and thoughtlessly, we wake each morning and go to bed at night after a tiring day, in the conviction that God exists. And so things go on, until some unexpected event or trouble occurs, which frequently serves to open our eyes to and invites us to an encounter with the Lord. So it was with me. My name is Tomasz. For 37 years I lived in the conviction that I knew Him and was walking in His path. But He, the all-knowing and good Father, knew full well that the day would come when, like the Prodigal Son, I would come to him, worn

down by my troubles, and would come to give my life to Him and beg for His mercy.

## A lifeline

Following 15 years of supposedly happy marriage, my wife left me. All attempts to save the marriage seemed to have the very opposite effect. The day of capitulation and separation came. In human terms, nothing else could be done – every effort had failed. The only course now open to me was to pray to Him for the miracle of reconciliation. I decided to do this by means of prayer and pilgrimage. A few years earlier, worries for my wife’s health had led me to the realisation that, in moments of complete helplessness, we are still able to do penance, go on pilgrimage and implore God for the miracle of healing.

The day had come when, filled with faith and like a drowning man, I would avail myself of this lifeline, this time not for physical healing, but to save my marriage. So, I set out. Having seven years earlier, read and heard much about the many miracles performed through the

intercession of Padre Pio, that was the way I now chose. My pilgrimage route led from central Poland to Apulia, Italy – almost 1,700km. Going alone, on foot, carrying only 20kg in basic necessities, having deliberately chosen to carry no money, I set out; having considered neither the difficulties involved nor the time it would take, nor who I would meet on the road.

My aim is not to describe or boast of my sufferings, difficulties or fears. I will mention however, that I carried my home in the form of a one man tent; my bed, in the form of a sleeping bag, and carried the rest, some clothes, medicines, some waterproof capes, a sleeping mat and some cables. I travelled for 47 days, asking people I met for food and water. For reasons of safety, I would always ask permission to pitch my tent on private land, a permission I was frequently granted. I had unlimited time and zero costs. I walked in prayer, meditation, music and the Word of God. For 47 days, I ceased to exist for the world. Making no effort to satisfy my own needs, I immersed myself in the Word of God, which I listened to on my MP3 player.







## Divine fuel

I could envisage a number of different scenarios. Above all else, I prayed for a miracle. I begged the Lord to change my wife. Instead, I was the one whom He changed first. I had never before spent so much time alone with Him. I had never listened to His Word with such rapt attention. I had claimed to know Him, despite having never previously read the Bible. As I did not know what God had to say to me, how on earth could I know what it was that He expected of me?

I was a point on a map, but one clearly identifiable to heaven. I experienced difficult moments which I find hard to describe, but each successive day bore witness to the Lord's great care and concern for me, His child. Heaven took care of all that was essential to my survival, in terms of food, safety, health, weather etc. On the other hand, the Word of God was the fuel I needed to keep going. Passages which I heard for the very first time blew my mind and went deep, gradually turning the "real" world upside down. Each successive meditation allowed me to

learn more. My situation, environment, circumstances, psychological state, all increased my capacity to absorb and understand all that I learnt of God's Word, and that Word has great power!

## Coincidence? I don't think so...

Today I am able to testify to the existence of a real and palpable spiritual reality which lies in opposition to physical reality. I knew of it in the same way as everyone else, but, quite apart from empty words, I am now convinced of its existence in reality. I followed the teachings I was hearing and learned about life with Jesus Christ as an example to follow. All this was being confirmed by signs, which to me, were no blind

coincidence. I could write a book on the subject, which is why I will now mention only a few facts which give me much food for thought.

For a pilgrim on foot there is nothing worse than a heavy down-pour of rain. I crossed hills, flatlands and walked hundreds of kilometres along bodies of water. This was over seven weeks in the middle of autumn, during which I had only four rainy days. When it rained, God always supplied me with a freshly-made bed, and this happened on each such occasion without exception. He never allowed me to go hungry, despite the fact that I was entirely dependent on the goodwill of others. On the day that I ran out of wet-wipes, I found a new, unopened packet. A second time, I was given one. Stopping to pray fervently for help, following a fruitless two-hour long search for a garden in which to pitch my tent,



photo: Stefan Czerniecki

■ The main entrance to the Shrine of St Michael the Archangel in Monte Sant'Angelo, Gargano, Italy



resulted in an immediate invitation to the first farm I encountered, and in spite of the language barrier. That same prayer resulted in the permanent cessation of an increasingly troublesome toothache after sun-down that same day. When I could not walk any further, due to injury, and the swelling, haematoma and pain made a two day stop likely, prayer resulted in healing which meant that, by the end of that same day, I was setting a pace worthy of the front runner in a race. Slowly, my worries of what the following day would bring and of the extent of my physical and psychological capacities, ceased. I became convinced that I was not doing this journey alone. The next time I had to sleep in a wood or beside a cemetery, I did so without fear, without a knife in my hand as I had previously, knowing that nothing would threaten me. The Lord never

left me without His protection. He really knew what I needed before I asked Him.

## A choice between a car or a Cross

My experiences led me to make a pledge of absolute trust in God, who, through His Word, gave me daily assurance of his goodness, faithfulness and love. I believed and trusted all that the Bible was telling me, even if it seemed impossible or incredible. I acknowledged Jesus as the Way, the Truth, the Life and the only right road to heaven. I became fully aware of the futility of the world. I realised how little a person actually requires for his/her survival and how much of what we have is simply to satisfy our wants and desires. I became

converted. I became aware of the extent of the evil and insensitivity there is to those around us, of how many people there are who serve God and how many are simply egotists. I also became fully aware of who I was and of the direction in which my life had been heading before I truly came to know Him. The Lord cleansed me and taught me a lot. I now face a life in this unreal, material world, with the awareness that it is only a moment in the scale of eternity, but a decisive one. I understood that if I spent the remaining years of my life according to God's Will, carrying a heavy and uncomfortable cross, then a reward awaits me in heaven. Alternatively, I could return to my old life, dreaming about a wonderful new car, and waste all my precious time in realising the kind of futile desires which are "destroyed by moths and woodworms" (Matthew 6:19).



■ The Grotto of St Michael the Archangel, Gargano, Italy



## A dead snake under my feet

Coming back to the signs and protection which I experienced during my journey, I had not yet had time to think about my very last stopping place on the road before reaching my desired goal, although this was very important in terms of ensuring that I had the necessary strength for my return journey, when God revealed His Will for me. One day I met a quite exceptional person. He let me sleep overnight in his conservatory and advised me to visit the Shrine of St Michael the Archangel on Mount Gargano as well as San Giovanni Rotondo. He said I would then have the opportunity to personally ask the Guardian Angel of the whole of Christianity, to overcome and vanquish all the evil that had been present in my marriage. Somewhat sceptically at that moment, I agreed to visit St Michael's shrine as well.

On the following day, however, at a moment when I felt quite down, for the very first time in my life, I said the prayer to the Archangel Michael, asking for his support and defence against the wiles of Satan. To my immense surprise, and at that very moment, I came across a dead black snake lying in my path. I took this as a sign and took the decision to make the journey, taking me 25km beyond my original destination, to the Prince of the Heavenly Host, and Victor over the Evil One. It could only be in the interests of the Devil and nobody else, to bring about the ruin of my marriage.

When I told this story to the priest with whom I was staying with

the following night, I discovered that the Shrine of St Michael was cared for by a Polish congregation, the Michaelite Fathers. This further convinced me of my journey there being part of God's plan and of His concern for my well-being. After 47 days' journey, upon reaching my final goal, I was among my fellow-countrymen, who took care of my needs, gave me food, rest, and offered me generous hospitality. They also permitted me to remain alone in the grotto, out of the normal opening times, which was the most amazing and extraordinary experience. I could not imagine a more wonderful ending to my journey. Our God is so generous and bountiful. I trust Him unreservedly and believe that he will hear my prayers and, someday, will save my marriage.



Today, I can testify that, solely by means of His Word, the Lord taught me patience, respect for the will of others, a spirit of service and unconditional love on my journey. He showed me my folly and sinfulness. He allowed me to touch the spiritual world and assured me that it is worthwhile to sacrifice the passing earthly life in order to gain an eternal reward in Heaven. Nobody opened my eyes to this truth, by their testimony or example, rather than the Word of God itself, which is the word of life, the sole signpost and teacher – just this, and yet so much... I would encourage everyone to become personally acquainted with the Good News which so often sits unread on our shelves at home. AMEN.

**Tomasz**, Poland



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## In the footsteps of St Faustina

# Warsaw

**On Saint Faustina's road of life there are villages, towns, cities, the most important places where the Apostle of the Divine Mercy stayed.**

**T**he former railway station - Warszawa Główna, which is the Railway Museum today was the first place touched by the saint's feet in Warsaw. In the

museum, among other things, old timetables have been preserved and one can check the arrivals of trains from Lodz. There were a few of them a day because the trains connected a big industrial centre - Lodz - with the capital of the country. Everything suggests that in 1924, Helenka Kowalska came to Warsaw by the train which was scheduled to arrive at the railway station Warszawa Główna at 5.35 pm. She seems to confirm it when she writes: "When I got off the train and saw that all were going their separate ways, I was overcome with fear. What am I to do? To whom should I turn, as I know no one? So I said to the Mother of God: 'Mary, lead me, guide me.' Immediately I heard these words within me telling me to leave the town and to go to a nearby village where I would find a safe lodging for the night. I did so and found, in fact, that everything was just as the Mother of God told me" (Diary 11). It must have been in the evening as the Mother of God told her to go to the village where she would find a safe lodging for the night.

## At St James Church

In the Diary she wrote: "Very early the next day, I rode back into the city and entered the first church I saw. There I began to pray to know further the will of God. Holy Masses



■ St James' Church, the very first church St Faustina entered when she arrived in Warsaw





were being celebrated one after another. During one of them I heard the words: 'Go to that priest and tell him everything; he will tell you what to do next.' After the Mass I went to the sacristy. I told the priest all that had taken place in my soul, and I asked him to advise me where to take the veil, in which religious order" (Diary 12). Rev. Jakub Dabrowski was the priest. He had worked in Klembow and was a friend of the Lipszyts family, who lived in Ostrowek. During the conversation with Helenka Kowalska he advised her to stay precisely at the Lipszyts, who needed someone to help them take care of the children. It was the place from which she set off to search for a convent. He gave her a note for the acquaintances, saying: "I don't know her but I hope she would be all right".

At that time the construction of St James Church at 38 Grojecka Street in Ochota, a suburb of Warsaw, was in its first stage. The church, with a characteristic tower with a square base started to be built in 1918, after Archbishop Aleksander Kakowski had erected the parish. The construction was finished in 1939 and the neo-Romanesque church has one nave and two aisles. At the end of the aisles there are two chapels: one is dedicated to Our Lady and the other to the Blessed Sacrament. During the Warsaw Uprising the church was considerably damaged and during a bombardment, the first parish priest, Rev. Jakub Dabrowski, was killed. After the war the church was rebuilt and it was consecrated by Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński (1960).

**Sr M. Elizabeth Siepak O.L.M**

Taken from the book "In the footsteps of St Faustina"

# Angels as children

**On one occasion my 5 year-old daughter Sophie asked: "Daddy, maybe you could write about the little angels? Do little angels exist as well as big ones?"**

**T**his is why, taking-up Sophie's suggestion, I would like to look at the question of child-like angels, such as those particularly to be found on Christmas cards and decorations. Is it appropriate to represent members of the heavenly armies in this way?

## Cherubs, that is 'putta'

Childlike angelic figures are deeply-rooted in the history of religious art. Many paintings show the angels as chubby naked boys, complete with little wings. This motif was popular in the Renaissance and Baroque periods. The best-known of these are probably the two angels to be found at the bottom of Rafael's "Sistine Madonna". While, at the top of the painting, there is the figure of the Madonna and Child, we then find two rascals at the bottom, resting on their elbows and looking upwards. These two youngsters were later to make a successful career for themselves in their own right. They have appeared in pictures, cartoons and in

advertising. They are an established part of popular culture, rivalling in popularity, the representation of the Creation of Man in the Sistine Chapel. Peter Paul Rubens' painting 'The Child Jesus with his contemporaries' (painted in 1615-20, presently in the Museum of Art History in Vienna), in which the angels seem to remain at the age of children, eternally young, infect us with their childish joy and merriment. The child-like representation of the angels is usually linked with joy, and so, also with Christmas. Not always, however. The work of Egid Quirin Asam in Freising Cathedral shows an extraordinary crucifix. At the side of each of Jesus' wounds, the artist has placed a sculpture of a small, child-like angel, weeping over the death of Jesus.

It has been fashionable to include child-like angels in the decoration of churches, which is why they are seen so frequently. It is hard to ignore the connection with the representation of Eros (Amor/Cupid) in the ancient world, so that these little angels are a Christianised form of the ancient cupids. Cherubs are often

represented as heads with wings and no visible body.

At a particular point in time, the little angels had begun to be referred to as 'cherubs', a particularly unfortunate association, as in the Old Testament, the cherubim are awesome, powerful beings who, with the flame of a flashing sword, were posted to guard the gates of the Garden of Eden. They hold up the throne of God, carry the chariot of Yahweh and are duty-bound to guard all that is sacred. In the history of art, the word 'putta' was also used for these little angels, wrongly referred to as 'cherubs'. The term 'putta' derives from the word for 'small boy' in the Tuscan dialect.

## There are no angel children

It is obviously difficult to find any Biblical references to angels as children. The angels have never been children. God created them exactly as they are at present, that is, as mature beings. Scripture says of them: "The truth is that they are all spirits whose work is service, sent to help those who will be the heirs of salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). These are not delicate cupids, smiling at us from behind a cloud. They display great power at times. They are, for instance, capable of destroying the world (2 Samuel 21:16-17 or Revelation 7:2), of killing 70,000 Israelites in one night (1 Chronicles 21:14), able to strike down 185,000 Assyrians (2 Kings 19:35, 1 Micah 7:41 and Isaiah 33:36).

When we visit cemeteries, we are always most deeply moved by the sight of the graves of children. We

then often see such inscriptions on their gravestones as "There is now one more angel in heaven" or "Sleep in peace, beloved little angel". While it is impossible, according to the teaching of the Church, for a human being to become an angel, we should treat such words as metaphorical and symbolic. Angels are purely spiritual beings, different from humans in terms of their vocation and nature. They are obviously beings, created by God, and so, are not eternal but had a beginning, just as we, as human beings, have our origin within the history of creation. The implication in the words that a dead child is 'among the hosts of angels', reflects our faith that, in its innocence, a child has attained salvation and now abides in heaven, where the saints and angels also dwell. The child is already part of the Church of the saved. We are quite right to derive comfort, in the event of the death of a child, from the thought that they are happy among the saints and angels in heaven, but they have not become angels, but are human beings who have attained salvation.

## Unless you change and become like little children...

Nowhere does the Bible mention angel-children, but the words of Jesus himself clearly do inspire such an association: "Unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

I would hazard a guess that the angels do not indulge in lengthy intellectual disputes about the nature

of God. They love and seek God with all their hearts. This is why the angels (despite the fact of they being powerful and mighty warriors) are nevertheless characterised by their child-like trust. Therefore, angels represented in art as children, are simply symbols (and no more than symbols) of purity and innocence. These are the attributes which characterise small children, rendering them therefore not dissimilar to the angels.

## Angels which have appeared in the form of children

As I had mentioned earlier, the Bible knows nothing of angel-children, but angelophany (according to a dictionary definition angelophany is 'the manifestation of an angel to man') has not been limited to biblical times.

There are accounts of angelic encounters outside the Bible, in which these powerful spirits have chosen to assume the form of children, but in such cases, these have been simply disguises, chosen to serve the accomplishment of a particular purpose.

One day, while walking along the coast, St Augustine, who was attempting to understand the mystery of the Holy Trinity, noticed a child, who was pouring water into a trough he had made in the sand. Observing the child, Augustine, with a condescending smile, had pointed out to him that it would be quite impossible to pour all the water from the sea into the trough. At this point, the child had told the



saint: “I will pour all the sea water into the trough faster than you will be able to understand the mystery of the Holy Trinity”, after which he disappeared from view.

Francesco Forgione, better known to us as Padre Pio, had a special devotion to his guardian angel. He held him in great affection and trusted him implicitly, calling him the companion of his childhood. Fr Eusebio wrote that young Francesco’s guardian angel took on the appearance of another child, and was therefore visible to him. In this way, Francesco’s heavenly companion enlivened his childhood and nurtured in him a longing for heaven. We cannot therefore rule out the possibility of angels appearing to children in the form of other children. Such a possibility is, after all, completely logical.

## Infantilism made use of by the Devil?

I have, on the other hand, met with the opinion that the Devil may sometimes make use of the idea of angels as little children in order to parody and belittle the Angels of God and attempt to undermine their authority. Despite the attractiveness of such an angelic portrayal, such an image may obscure our recognition of their fundamental nature as powerful spiritual beings, commissioned by God for our protection.

During the false apparitions of Garabandal, the supposed figure of St Michael the Archangel, appeared in the form of a small child with a horrifying face and wings which stood,



■ The Sistine Madonna by Raphael, 1512

as it were, separately at his side. Fr Jozef Warszawski, who carried out a detailed theological analysis of the happenings at Garabandal and saw in them the deceits of the Devil, saw in this image of St Michael, the attempt

to parody the Prince of the Heavenly Host. This is likely.

Therefore, the context in which an angel is seen in child-like form is crucial.

**Roman Zajac, Poland**



# Your inestimable value

**The following is the full text of the Pope's homily that he said during World Youth Day, 31st July 2016.**



■ Zacchaeus' sycamore fig tree in Jericho, Palestinian Authority

*Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.*

*When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.*

*All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."*

*Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."*

Luke 19:1-10

**D**ear young people, you have come to Krakow to meet Jesus. Today's Gospel speaks to us of just such a meeting between Jesus and a man named Zacchaeus, in Jericho. There Jesus does not simply preach or greet people; as the Evangelist tells us, He passed through the city. In other words, Jesus wants to draw near to us personally, to accompany our journey to its end, so that His life and our life can truly meet.

"An amazing encounter then takes place, with Zacchaeus, the chief 'publican' or tax collector. Zacchaeus was thus a wealthy collaborator of the hated Roman occupiers, someone who exploited his own people, someone who, because of his ill repute, could not even approach the Master. His encounter with Jesus changed his life, just as it has changed, and can daily still change, each of our lives. But Zacchaeus had to face a number of obstacles in order to meet Jesus, it was not easy for him. At least three of these can also say something to us.

"The first obstacle is smallness of stature. Zacchaeus couldn't see the Master because he was little. Even

today we can risk not getting close to Jesus because we don't feel big enough, because we don't think ourselves worthy. This is a great temptation; it has to do not only with self-esteem, but with faith itself. For faith tells us that we are "children of God... that is what we are". We have been created in God's own image; Jesus has taken upon Himself our humanity and His heart will never be separated from us; the Holy Spirit wants to dwell within us. We have been called to be happy for ever with God!

"That is our real 'stature', our spiritual identity: we are God's beloved children, always. So you can see that not to accept ourselves, to live glumly, to be negative, means not to recognise our deepest identity. It is like walking away when God wants to look at me, trying to spoil His dream for me. God loves us the way we are, and no sin, fault or mistake of ours makes Him change His mind. As far as Jesus is concerned – as the Gospel shows – no one is unworthy of, or far from, His thoughts. No one is insignificant. He loves all



of us with a special love; for Him all of us are important: you are important! God counts on you for what you are, not for what you possess. In His eyes the clothes you wear or the kind of cell phone you use are of absolutely no concern. He doesn't care whether you are stylish or not; He cares about you, just as you are! In His eyes, you are precious, and your value is inestimable.

"At times in our lives, we aim lower rather than higher. At those times, it is good to realise that God remains faithful, even obstinate, in His love for us. The fact is, He loves us even more than we love ourselves. He believes in us even more than we believe in ourselves. He is always 'cheering us on'; He is our biggest fan. He is there for us, waiting with patience and hope, even when we turn in on ourselves and brood over our troubles and past injuries. But such brooding is unworthy of our spiritual stature! It is a kind of virus

infecting and blocking everything; it closes doors and prevents us from getting up and starting over. God, on the other hand, is hopelessly hopeful! He believes that we can always get up, and He hates to see us glum and gloomy. It is sad to see young people who are glum. Because we are always His beloved sons and daughters. Let us be mindful of this at the dawn of each new day. It will do us good to pray every morning: 'Lord, I thank you for loving me; I am sure that you love me; help me to be in love with my own life!' Not with my faults, that need to be corrected, but with life itself, which is a great gift, for it is a time to love and to be loved.

"Zacchaeus faced a second obstacle in meeting Jesus: the paralysis of shame. We spoke a little about this yesterday. We can imagine what was going on in his heart before he climbed that sycamore. It must have been quite a struggle – on one hand, a healthy curiosity and desire to know

Jesus; on the other, the risk of appearing completely ridiculous. Zacchaeus was a public figure, a man of power, but deeply hated. He knew that, in trying to climb that tree, he would have become a laughing stock to all. Yet he mastered his shame, because the attraction of Jesus was more powerful. You know what happens when someone is so attractive that we fall in love with them: we end up ready to do things we would never have even thought of doing. Something similar took place in the heart of Zacchaeus, when he realised that Jesus was so important that he would do anything for Him, since Jesus alone could pull him out of the mire of sin and discontent. The paralysis of shame did not have the upper hand. The Gospel tells us that Zacchaeus 'ran ahead', 'climbed' the tree, and then, when Jesus called him, he 'hurried down'. He took a risk, he put his life on the line. For us too, this is the secret of joy: not to stifle a healthy curiosity,



■ Pope Francis during the World Youth Day in Krakow, July 2016

but to take a risk, because life is not meant to be tucked away. When it comes to Jesus, we cannot sit around waiting with arms folded; He offers us life – we can't respond by thinking about it or 'texting' a few words!

"Dear young friends, don't be ashamed to bring everything to the Lord in confession, especially your weaknesses, your struggles and your sins. He will surprise you with His forgiveness and His peace. Don't be afraid to say 'yes' to Him with all your heart, to respond generously and to follow Him! Don't let your soul grow numb, but aim for the goal of a beautiful love which also demands sacrifice. Say a firm 'no' to the narcotic of success at any cost and the sedative of worrying only about yourself and your own comfort.

"After his small stature, after the paralysis of shame, there was a third obstacle that Zacchaeus had to face. It was no longer an interior one, but was all around him. It was the grumbling of the crowd, who first blocked him and then criticised him: How could Jesus have entered his house, the house of a sinner! How truly hard it is to welcome Jesus, how hard it is to accept a 'God who is rich in mercy'! People will try to block you, to make you think that God is distant, rigid and insensitive, good to the good and bad to the bad. Instead, our heavenly Father 'makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good'. He demands of us real courage: the courage to be more powerful than evil by loving everyone, even our enemies. People may laugh at you because you believe in the gentle and unassuming power of mercy. But do not be afraid. Think of the motto of these days: 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy'. People may judge you to be dreamers, because

you believe in a new humanity, one that rejects hatred between peoples, one that refuses to see borders as barriers and can cherish its own traditions without being self-centred or small-minded. Don't be discouraged: with a smile and open arms, you proclaim hope and you are a blessing for our one human family, which here you represent so beautifully!

"That day the crowd judged Zacchaeus; they looked him over, up and down. But Jesus did otherwise: He gazed up at him. Jesus looks beyond the faults and sees the person. He does not halt before bygone evil, but sees future good. His gaze remains constant, even when it is not met; it seeks the way of unity and communion. In no case does it halt at appearances, but looks to the heart. Jesus looks to our hearts, your heart, my heart. With this gaze of Jesus, you can help bring about another humanity, without looking for acknowledgement but seeking goodness for its own sake, content to maintain a pure heart and to fight peaceably for honesty and justice. Don't stop at the surface of things; distrust the worldly cult of appearances, cosmetic attempts to improve our looks. Instead, 'download' the best 'link' of all, that of a heart which sees and transmits goodness without growing weary. The joy that you have freely received from God, please, freely give away: so many people are waiting for it! So many are waiting for it from you.

"Finally let us listen to the words that Jesus spoke to Zacchaeus, which seem to be meant for us today, for each one of us: 'Come down, for I must stay at your house today'. 'Come down, for I must stay with you today. Open to me the door of your heart'. Jesus extends the same

invitation to you: 'I must stay at your house today'. We can say that World Youth Day begins today and continues tomorrow, in your homes, since that is where Jesus wants to meet you from now on. The Lord doesn't want to remain in this beautiful city, or in cherished memories alone. He wants to enter your homes, to dwell in your daily lives: in your studies, your first years of work, your friendships and affections, your hopes and dreams. How greatly He desires that you bring all this to Him in prayer! How much He hopes that, in all the 'contacts' and 'chats' of each day, pride of place be given to the golden thread of prayer! How much He wants His word to be able to speak to you day after day, so that you can make His Gospel your own, so that it can serve as a compass for you on the highways of life!

"In asking to come to your house, Jesus calls you, as He did Zacchaeus, by name. All of us, Jesus calls by name. Your name is precious to Him. The name 'Zacchaeus' would have made people back then think of the remembrance of God. Trust the memory of God: His memory is not a 'hard disk' that 'saves' and 'archives' all our data, His memory is a heart filled with tender compassion, one that finds joy in 'erasing' in us every trace of evil. May we too now try to imitate the faithful memory of God and treasure the good things we have received in these days. In silence, let us remember this encounter, let us preserve the memory of the presence of God and His word, and let us listen once more to the voice of Jesus as He calls us by name. So let us now pray silently, remembering and thanking the Lord Who wanted us to be here and has come here to meet us."



# Make your mark

**As World Youth Day pilgrims, we focused on fundamentals and immersed ourselves in the culture of Poland.**

Seventy-five years ago this morning (that is 14 August 1941), Nazi guards walked into an Auschwitz cell and found a 47-year-old Polish priest, clinging to life, refusing to die, three weeks after they began starving the priest and his fellow prisoners to death.

Frustrated that he had somehow outlasted his peers, ministering to them and holding his head high to the end, the Nazis gave a lethal injection to the hero who sacrificed his own life for others: the martyr we now know as St Maximilian Kolbe.

Tomorrow is the Feast of the Assumption of Mary and the 96th anniversary of the 1920 Miracle on the Vistula, when Poland defeated the Soviet Union, saving a war-weary Europe from a Bolshevik takeover. September 12 will mark 333 years since Poles stopped a massive Ottoman invasion of Vienna, preventing an Islamic takeover of Europe in 1683. We Americans routinely exaggerate about our adversaries and political foes, calling them names like dangerous, crazy, evil, corrupt and insane. In our most heated arguments we even liken our rivals to tyrants, Nazis, Communists and Socialists, terms Americans have little actual real life experience with while Poles endured, battled and overcame each of these challenges.

Today, as Christians are butchered or driven from their homes in the Middle East, we can learn much from a nation that was wiped off the world map for 123 years, a people that clung stubbornly to its church and culture, a nation that refused to die. We Americans and all the nations that descended on World Youth Day can learn much from Poland, a nation that actually fought, endured and overcame the worst imaginable struggles and sufferings.

In Luke 12:49 Jesus said, “I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!” He told St Faustina: “I bear a special love for Poland, and if she will be obedient to My will, I will exalt her in might and holiness. From her will come forth the spark that will prepare the world for My final coming” (Diary, 1732).

Scholars say St John Paul II offered that “spark from Poland”. This summer, World Youth Day, the tradition he began, came to Krakow, Poland, the beloved home of Saints JP II and Faustina. That spark from Poland spread to a new generation.

All around us you could feel the latest spark from Poland, nearly 3 million pilgrims from 187 countries camped side by side to be with their Holy Father. As we gathered in Poland, terrorist attacks were erupting across Europe. More than 20 children were slaughtered in a German McDonald’s while a French priest was being executed by ISIS.

Yet somehow, we all felt safe and were getting along in Poland. The

most obnoxious rivalries you’d see would be when pilgrims from rival nations challenged each other to sing-offs to see who could be the most vociferous in touting their native land. Flag wavers were all around.

We lived, ate and slept side by side, shaking hands and holding hands in prayer, slapping each other high fives as we cheered each other on. Pope Francis challenged us to each find our own way, to become who God created us to be, to “make our mark” just as St John Paul II challenged us to find our own life’s mission.



A surprising number of young people in our group spoke of pursuing vocations. So many different cultures side by side (only a handful of the world’s nations were not represented). Yet, we reminded each other we are unique yet a part of something bigger than ourselves, something universal, one family of brothers and sisters, all Children of God, one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

**Joseph J. Serwach, Detroit, USA**

# The journey home

**In the autumn of 2009 my mother gave me a Divine Mercy prayer book. At the time I was away from the Church and going through a difficult and unpleasant divorce. Wrongly I was convinced that as a divorcee, I would no longer be welcome in the Church. The Divine Mercy prayer book was so precious at that time.**

**M**y dad had died after a short illness. Mum gravely ill with terminal breast cancer was determined to attend Dad's funeral. I was a critical care nurse and I went to stay at my parents' home to nurse my mother. We got her home oxygen, then the hospice became available and she did through the grace of God manage to attend Dad's funeral, albeit with the oxygen.

## The seed was sown

Fr Alan, my parent's parish priest, visited and the 'journey home seed' was sown. I had the opportunity for Fr Alan to hear my confession and I opened my heart again to our Lord. My mum died on Christmas Day, four weeks to the day after Dad's death; his ashes went in her coffin.

The New Year brought the news that I had cervical cancer, extensive surgery was advised. At the time my boys were getting on with their lives, it was a hard time for them without their father. I deliberately played down my illness and was now adept at hiding my emotions.

I had the surgery privately but knew I was too ill to be discharged just two days later... Besides, I was too weak to be my usual assertive self. I required emergency readmission a

few days later, serious post-op complications had set in after my surgery; I was in shock.

## The face of Christ

Whist lying on the bed, with staff trying to get IV access, I became aware of an image of a veiled lady on the opposite cream wall, just above head height to the right. The image turned and transformed into the unmistakable face of Christ. An overwhelming sense of calmness filled me.

The next few hours and days were just a blur. I would spend times awake praying for the image to reappear. On about the fifth day a consultant

told me that the medical team had thought I was going to die. In fact I thought I was going to die!

I later shared my story with my parish priest Fr D. Towey. This was a personal affirmation for me from Our Lady leading me back to her son Jesus.

## Belief in the Divine Mercy

In May 2011, I made my first pilgrimage to Medjugorje and prayed the Divine Mercy daily. My health was a concern again. A check-up scan had found five lesions on the liver and two on the spleen. Lying in bed the





third night during my pilgrimage I was woken to the experience of what I can only describe as the sensation of several firm tugs on my upper abdomen. Like stitches being pulled.

That autumn the scan check revealed no lesions were present on either the liver or the spleen. However the subsequent scan showed two lesions had returned on the liver again, one I was informed was 4.5 cm in size.

Another pilgrimage to Medjugorje followed. Again the same sensation, two sharp distinct tugs that awoke me on the second or third night. Soon after my return my next scan was carried out by the consultant. He said that the liver was absolutely clear. The consultant could see nothing that could even remotely have been confused as a lesion by the previous radiographer.

For the next few years I was embarrassed that no one would believe me, very few close friends were told my story. Today my liver and spleen remain free of lesions. My belief in the Divine Mercy has continued to grow.

## My promise before God

I returned from a fruitful pilgrimage led by Fr Peter Prusakiewicz CSMA to the Divine Mercy Shrine in Krakow, Poland on 12th September 2016 and along with several other pilgrims made my promise before God at an official enrolment on the last day after Holy Mass and became a Devotional Knight of St Michael the Archangel. I thank Jesus every day and was drawn to share my testimony with the pilgrims.

MG, UK

# Christmas meditation

**Would you like to talk about Christmas, Beloved? I heard the request of your heart. You want to leave all this talk about your miserable inadequacy and focus instead on the joys of the season. Very well. We will not speak of your lowliness today. Let us look instead at Mine.**

Consider first My Mother in the stable. She has no bright nursery prepared for the arrival of her little One. Apart from Joseph, there is no support from family or friends. She is far from home amidst strangers and animals. Can you imagine the depth of her inadequacy in this moment? All mothers long to provide the best for their children. She struggles to even warm her Child. You regret that you cannot give finer gifts to your loved ones this year. My Mother could not even provide a clean bed.

But look, Beloved. See! There is no grief here. See her joy? She trusts completely, totally in her heavenly Father. She knows He has allowed this circumstance for her and her Child, and knows therefore that this bed could not be finer if it were made of silk and purest gold. Angels come and adore her Child and she has eyes of faith to see. They celebrate and soothe Him with the song of the heavenly choir, and she has ears that are open to hear.

Even in the earthly realm, the needs of her Child are met beyond her fondest dreams. Visitors share

her awe at the miracle she holds in her arms - what mother could ask for more? Travelers bring gifts fit for a king. No blessing escapes her notice, and her heart overflows in gratitude. She is open to receive heavenly graces that, in the darkness of the stable, might go unnoticed by others. The light of faith illumines her eyes.

Next consider Joseph, her loving spouse. What man would not grieve at being unable to provide for his family? He is completely inadequate in the eyes of the world. He cannot give them safety or warm shelter in this tender moment. There is no physician to tend to his Wife or Child. He is not even certain of their next meal. And soon he will learn that his Child is in grave danger from those who seek His life. As a father, Joseph is helpless, vulnerable, and completely weak.

And yet he is so strong. See My Mother's total trust in him? How does she have such peaceful dependence on this inadequate man?

She trusts his vulnerability. His weakness is his strength. He knows he is powerless against the swords

of Herod's men. He knows that he has nothing of his own to offer to his family. My Mother trusts in Joseph because she sees him on his knees begging the help of his heavenly Father. She sees him placing her and her Child in His loving care, and she sleeps in peace because she knows these prayers will not go unanswered. Their Father will provide for them, and Joseph, with his humble heart, will hear the reply and obey.

Consider now the Child. Remember that I came to earth to show you the way. I created each cell of your being, the air you breathe, the majestic mountains, the sun, the moon, the universe itself. Why did I choose to enter your existence in such a lowly state?

Is there anything on earth more inadequate than a newborn infant? What does he bring to the world but trouble and inconvenience? He cannot even clean up his own mess. He has nothing to offer his parents, yet

observe the way they dote on him. He does nothing to earn their love, but they are completely captivated by the simple fact of his existence. He does not recognize the hours they spend at his side nor appreciate the sacrifices they make on his behalf, but behold the depth of their devotion.

Why do they love him so? It is not because of anything he has or does. It is not because of anything they expect him to become. They are not even thinking of his future right now. They are completely lost in this moment, loving every fibre of his being with all the love their human hearts can pour forth, simply because he is.

He is enough. He is more than enough. The wonder of his existence makes time stand still for those who behold him, and for a brief moment, onlookers experience the awe of knowing that nothing else on earth really matters apart from this. Hold him for a while and experience the miracle.

Now add to the scene the wonder of this Infant's identity, and allow yourself to understand...

I AM. It is enough. It is more than enough. A glimpse of My existence completely takes your breath away. Remain here for a moment. Stay with Me...

Sometime, when you are ready, reverse the scene. Rest in the place of the infant, helpless and vulnerable in My arms, with nothing to offer except openness to receive the depth of My love.

I wait for you in Bethlehem this Christmas. I have received the frankincense of your prayers and the myrrh of your tears. I wait for your gift of finest gold - the gift of your complete trust and total dependence on Me.

Be open to receive My love like a little child. Be open to pour it out on the world. I came to earth for this.

This is what Christmas means.

J.S., USA



■ Adoration of the Shepherds by Gerard van Honthorst, 1622

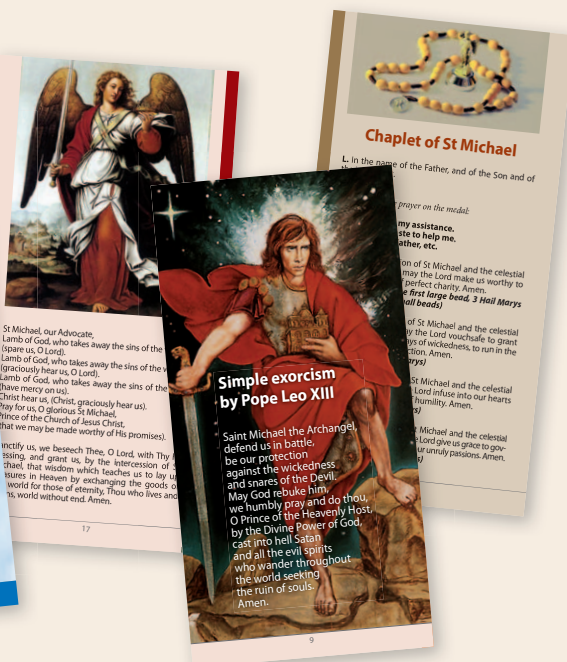
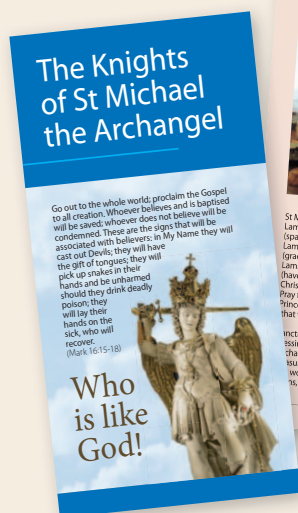


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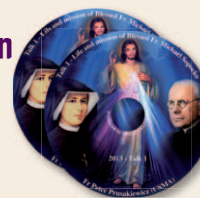
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## RETREATS BY FATHER PETER PRUSAKIEWICZ CSMA

## USA

**11<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016**

### Divine Mercy Mission

St Louis de Montfort Church  
1190 East Clark Ave,  
Santa Maria, CA 93455  
Phone: +1-(805) 937-4555  
Email: sldmchurch@sldm.org

**23<sup>rd</sup> April 2017**

### Divine Mercy Sunday

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

**24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2017**

### Divine Mercy Mission

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

## SCOTLAND

**11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017**

### The Angels retreat

Craig Lodge, Dalmally  
Argyll. PA33 1AR  
Phone: +44 (0) 4838-200-216  
Email: mail@craiglodge.org  
www.craiglodge.org

**14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> July 2017**

### The Divine Mercy retreat

Craig Lodge, Dalmally  
Argyll. PA33 1AR  
Phone: +44 (0) 4838-200-216  
Email: mail@craiglodge.org  
www.craiglodge.org

## WALES

**3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> March 2017**

### Talk: Divine Mercy

Franciscan Friary  
Monastery Road  
Pantasaph Holywell,  
Flintshire CH8 8PE

Contact: Anne Davies  
Phone: +44 (0)1352-711-053

**5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> October 2017**

### Divine Mercy Mission

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

**8<sup>th</sup> October 2017**

### 9:00 am and 11:00 am Masses

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

**13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017**

### Talk: Divine Mercy

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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



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

*(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)*

*Recite on the next four beads:*

1 Our Father in honour of St Michael

1 Our Father in honour of St Gabriel

1 Our Father in honour of St Raphael

1 Our Father in honour of our Guardian Angel

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

## Prayer of Pope Leo XIII

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