

The Angels

Messengers from a loving God

**Respect
for conceived
life**

**Battle
for man's
salvation**

**What does
Divine
Mercy mean?**

**Patron for
those in crisis**

**Our precious
little boy Michael**



Mary who is exalted

St Gabriel was sent to Mary to announce the wonderful mystery of the incarnation. We lift our heads and look at Mary who is exalted, honoured by God, because during her lifetime she was humble. However, Mary was given the great privilege of being the Mother of Christ, God's Mother. She exhibited godly love and did not brag or boast about her own merit or her own accomplishments for others to know or see.

To follow Mary means to be modest and humble, but it is not easy. We are tempted to put ourselves first, to be considered a very important person. Mary was not arrogant or proud. Her gaze was always towards her son, Jesus Christ.

Through her trust and total reliance upon God, Mary stands in complete opposition to Satan, who had shown disobedience to God. Thanks to her attitude, she is able to destroy the evil plan of the Prince of Darkness, who hates Mary because of it, but at the same time is afraid of her as she is the only one who does not succumb to his lies.

The apocalyptic vision is not only a simple parable, but an image of the real battle which from the very beginning is taking place in human history.



The main thrust of this fierce battle is directed against Mary as it was thanks to her that the One who conquered death had come into this world. The struggle is becoming more and more intense as Satan is aware his days are numbered. (Rv 12:12).

Mary was a virgin. She was a Mother and the spouse of St Joseph. She lived in a family where Jesus was allowed to grow up and mature safely, until His mission could be fulfilled. Hence the threat to the concepts of family, virginity and motherhood is so serious, as it is precisely thanks to these values that man is able to fulfil God's plan and realise his calling to eternal life. It is very easy to recognize this ideology which is aimed against life, a life in the womb and of a new born.

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.

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The Angels

Messengers from a loving God

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The Angels Magazine





Jacek Kawa

What do colours mean?

The navy blue and black scapular cords and shield of St Michael.

Christian symbolism of the scapular

Today the scapular of St Michael the Archangel consists of two layers of woolen cloth in the shape of a shield and two cords in the colours blue and black.

The blue cord and blue shield

In paintings, Mary is traditionally portrayed in blue. It was an expression of devotion and glorification to swathe the Virgin in gowns of blue.

It is the colour of the sky and viewed as heavenly and, most significantly, of the Virgin Mary. She is seen at times with a red outer cloak and a blue inner cloak representing her purity and how she carried divinity (Jesus) in her humanity.

Blue is a very important colour in the artistic traditions of Christianity, and has deep spiritual meanings that bring out different attributes of the Blessed Mother. It is a sacred colour that reminds us of her grace, faithfulness and her privileged role in salvation history.

Transformations in visual depictions of the Virgin from the 13th to 15th centuries mirror her “social” standing within the Church, as well as in society, and label her as an empress, for blue was associated with Byzantine royalty.

Blue in iconography represents transcendence, mystery and the

divine. Blue had deep spiritual roots in the Old Testament. (Numbers 4: 6-7, 15: 28-39).

The image on the blue shield of the scapular is of Our Lady from Miejsce Piastowe, Poland, the motherhouse of the Michaelite Fathers.

The black cord and black shield

These symbolise St Michael as a soldier or warrior who fights against evil. The black shield has the image of St Michael the Archangel from the shrine at Monte Sant’Angelo, Mount Gargano, Italy.

Q&A St Michael Scapular
www.stmichaelthearchangel.info

Battle for man's salvation

Faith gives us the ability to see and understand things in Divine light truly as they are. Satan, a formidable enemy of man, knows this well, so he does everything to blind our minds and faith.

How does he do it? By focusing human attention only on their desires and needs, on social success or the pursuit of material goods and comfort. Although there is nothing wrong in the above values, they cannot be the centre of human life. Otherwise, they blind people with self-love, pride, jealousy, anger, envy, hatred and at the same time they obscure higher values such as God, salvation, love, faith, hope, compassion, patience and many others that build the Kingdom of God here on earth. Satan, with no mercy, uses all his intelligence and power to distract human beings from God who is the main source of their happiness and who gives life in abundance.

Satan's tricks

St Paul says that Satan's primary task is precisely to blind the mind so that people would not be able to perceive the splendour and beauty of the Gospel as well as to know the love of Christ and thus be saved (cf. 2 Cor 4:4).

Those deceived by Satan become his servants – sometimes in complete unawareness of what is going on. He uses them in the press, radio, television and on daily occasions to fight Christ, Christianity as a religion, and Christians through personal verbal and physical attacks.

He also tries to blind Christians to weaken their faith and trust in God and in His goodness and mercy so that their daily lives becomes less religious, less theocentric, less focused on the Kingdom of Heaven. As a result they lose the sense of the sacred and allow Divine life and graces be stolen from their hearts.

God acts

In His great love for man God reminds people of His presence and care. He does not want them to be blinded by evil spirits and make bad, sinful choices.

He is constantly looking for mankind and knocks on their hearts to wake their consciences in different ways. Sometimes it may happen via a disease, suffering, remorse or rebukes from brothers in faith.

But first of all, it happens via the Word of God read during Holy Masses, at prayer groups or through individual lectures. St Augustine, explains that when we want to commit one sin or another, our opponent is the Word of God. The Word of God goes against our will telling us: don't do it!

Let us take notice of how good and useful this challenger is. If we go with the Word of God in harmony, at the end of our lives we meet our heavenly merciful God-Father instead of God-Judge; we will enter eternal happiness

in the Father's house instead of eternal prison in hell.

Bl Fr Bronisław Markiewicz writes about the time we have here on earth as the time of grace, the time of salvation because at any moment we have an opportunity to do good and repent for our wrongdoings. In hell the damned cry, for there is no more time for them to save themselves from eternal bondage. How much would they pay for one hour to make an act of repentance and thus free themselves from condemnation!

St Michael the Archangel fights on our side

God engages good angels in the work of our salvation as it is the key issue for Him.

The Bible mentions St Michael in five passages, four of which describe him as a warrior, fighting for God and His honour (Rev 12:7-9), or in defence of the People of God (Dn 10:13.21), or about the body of Moses (Jude 9). Over the centuries, in the Christian tradition, Archangel Michael is portrayed as a brave warrior of God and receives a number of honourable titles such as: Supreme Commander of the Heavenly Hosts; Prince of the Heavenly Army; and,

Ensign of God. These titles are also taken up in religious art and literature. Artists, writers and poets compete in portraying St Michael the Archangel in knightly armour and in the attitude of victor over the enemy of God and people. All this refers to the dramatic battle that took place between the good and bad angels in heaven.

During this terrible fight St Michael the Archangel became what he is today. 'Who is like God!' was not only a battle call but also a powerful cry of truth. These words touch our minds and hearts today; 'Who is like God!' introduces Divine light and truth into our daily lives.

We cannot forget that the fight which started in heaven continues here

on earth. Bl Fr Bronisław Markiewicz explains that previously it was a fight only between good and bad angels. Today on earth it is a fight between two camps. On the one hand, there are angels and people of good will, and on the other hand, there are rebellious angels and perverse people.

Bloodless struggle

St Michael guides this struggle constantly. We must realise that each of us is to take an active part in this spiritual battle. What should we do? How do we join the good army?

First of all, Bl Fr Bronisław Markiewicz recommends looking for the Kingdom of Heaven, that is, spiritual goods and values that will last forever. Only in this way will we find happiness and fulfilment the world cannot give.

Secondly, we need to fight against our sins and defects of character in the name and spirit of Christ – everyday, with a humble attitude, wherever we are right now, at work, or at home, ill or healthy, young or old. Bl Fr Bronisław Markiewicz calls it a bloodless struggle.

Thirdly, we do not need to worry about the result, for Christ has already won. His victory is final and irreversible. We need to persevere in His grace and in good.

St Michael the Archangel is a great example for us. He also supports us with his effective help. St Michael the Archangel, brave warrior of Almighty God, plead for us to obtain the grace of decisively standing up for God at every moment and in every situation of life. Amen



■ The fall of the rebel angels by Luca Giordano, circa 1666

Fr Henryk Skoczylas CSMA

Patron for those in crisis



■ Blessed Fr Bronisław Markiewicz

Was Father Bronisław Markiewicz a successful man? If you look at the work he left behind, the answer is yes. He could even be included in the list of the 100 most influential Poles of all time.

He certainly wasn't looking at himself that way. He did not expect God's plan to be so wide-ranging and stand the test of time. However, if we look at his heritage as a matter of 'earthly success', we would trivialise the spiritual dimension of his life and mission.

Looking at it from a spiritual point of view, Fr Bronisław Markiewicz was, above all, a man of crises; very significant ones because his salvation depended on them. There were three serious trials in his life: a crisis of faith, a crisis of vocation and a crisis of mission.

Crisis of faith

The first crisis took place during his school years. While in school at the age of eighteen he suffered an absence of faith due to the aggressive anti-religious atmosphere of his school. Of that he wrote, "I wanted to adapt to my teachers' views." And he also wrote, "Along with faith in God, I lost the peace in my soul and my sense of interior harmony. I was overcome by sadness." He describes the state as "standing on the edge of spiritual abyss."

How did the young student overcome the crisis of faith? It was possible only thanks to prayer. Despite various doubts that troubled him he did not give up prayer for a single day. He persevered in prayer and God did not remain silent in response to his cry.

Everything through Mary

In his spiritual notebook Bronisław writes that the Mother of God appeared to him when praying. From that moment he never faced a crisis of faith again. It is also interesting that in the moment of trial and doubt in faith, neither God the Father nor the Son of God appeared to him, but Mary. After all, no one has been confronted with such a test of faith as Mary. At the Annunciation she had a choice between natural human doubts and obedience to the Word of God addressed directly to her. She cast aside doubts and chose faith. She has become a model for all those who are facing a crisis of faith. He wrote, "The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is fundamental to Her holiness and greatness. That is why Mary from the depths of Her grateful heart, continually repeats, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord for the Almighty has done great things for me" (Luke 1:46-49). She also calls upon all rational

creatures to join Her in thanksgiving, especially for the grace received by Her not only for herself, but for our salvation.

After this experience Father Markiewicz directed his future spiritual life for and with the Immaculate Virgin Mary. He wrote, "Mary, my mother listens to me with kindness and joy. None of my loved ones or friends loves me as much as my Mother Mary. In unhappiness, in doubts and in sorrow I will run to Mary. In temptations, in sin, I will resort to Mary, since She is the Refuge of Sinners". Through the Mother of Christ and Her miraculous protection, through whom miracles occur by means of Her intercession for all time throughout the world.

Vocational crisis

Another crisis occurred during his priesthood. Fr Markiewicz felt somehow that all the tasks he performed as a priest were good but, not enough; he must have heard the voice of God asking him to search for more. The search to discover his own calling was deeply embedded in him and for a long time did not give him inner peace.

That is why as a mature priest he asks the Bishop of Przemyśl for permission to enter a monastery. After obtaining permission, he leaves his homeland and goes to Italy to join the order of Theatines, the strictest one at that time. After a long journey, Fr Markiewicz gets off at Rome's Termini station. He directs his steps to the station square and looks for the nearest church. The church tower he sees from the square that of

the Sacred Heart of Jesus' church belonging to the Salesians. He knocks on the gate and asks to stay overnight. What happened behind those walls will always remain a mystery for us. We only know that Fr Markiewicz gives up the idea of joining the Theatines and decides to become a Salesian. The vocation crisis is overcome.

Fr Markiewicz must have been open to the Divine signs and discerned them. He understood that God led him there to meet Fr John Bosco.

After some time he went to Turin to meet the famous Salesian priest to begin a novitiate and become a spiritual student of Bosco. After two years, he made his first vows. He also contracted tuberculosis in 1889, which was aggressive and he almost died from it. The disease left him in 1890 at which point he could return to Poland. He left Turin with the permission of his Salesian superior on 23rd March 1892 to become the first Polish Salesian parish priest at Miejsce Piastowe.

Youth mission crisis

Establishing the educational institution for neglected boys and the organisation of the new congregation absorbs Fr Markiewicz completely. This is his mission to which he devotes all his time, prayers and energy. The third crisis is related to this very mission.

The crisis arose from having to answer to two authorities. On the one hand was Mosè Veronesi, and on the other Bishop Józef Sebastian

Pelczar. The first one, Mosè Veronesi, is the visitor sent by the Italian Salesians to check Fr Markiewicz's work. He states in harsh words that the educational institution was not run in the Italian style. He orders the immediate implementation of "Italian customs" such as; carers and pupils eating separately, better food for carers including beer or wine served for dinner. However, what worked well in Italy would be viewed as a bad example among the poor and hungry local people living below the poverty line. Again, Fr Markiewicz discerns God's signs and decides to leave the Salesian order. It is a very brave decision. It must have cost him a lot. For him, however, the most important thing is to fulfil the mission that God gave him personally. Caring for the material and spiritual welfare of the orphans is his top priority.

The mission's crisis, however, continues and reaches its climax when Bishop Józef Pelczar issues a decree dissolving the new congregation that Fr Markiewicz dreamed of. For him all is clear, he is obedient to the decision of Church authorities. Although the idea of a new congregation is still alive in his heart, he gives up all efforts to establish it. At the same time he does not abandon the work of caring for the poor and abandoned children that God has entrusted to him.

He calmly accepts the decision of his superiors. The mission crisis is overcome through obedience and humility. Only a humble person is able to understand and accept God's will in a decision of an authority figure. Only a humble person is able to accept their own suffering and abandon their own ambitions for God.

A message for religious

The life of the founding father of each order leaves a mark on the history of his congregation and of all its members. It is the same for the Congregation of St Michael the Archangel established by Fr Markiewicz. We, as the Michaelite fathers, brothers and sisters, are primarily exposed to three crises that our founder experienced in his life.

The first is a crisis of faith: that is a temptation to abandon God for what is not God. However, following the example of Fr Markiewicz, we can overcome this crisis through prayer. Only in prayer are we able to resist anything that threatens our faith in God. Without prayer, the life of Fr Markiewicz's spiritual daughters and sons remains only a social, philanthropic and charitable activity.

The second threat is the crisis of vocation. It manifests mainly in doubts about the choices we have made and about being faithful to our vocation. It is a willingness to abandon the convent for one's own ambitions and comfort, and the conviction that the vocation that God has given us is out of date or too difficult. We can only overcome such a crisis by reading the signs. We must see God's action in our lives. We must also see them in the lives of the people to whom we are sent. Only in this way will we overcome this crisis.

The last crisis is about our mission. It manifests mainly in doubts about the sense of our work, about

the continuation of the congregation and its development. We must place all our doubts in God's hands. It is not strictly "our" work. It did not even belong to Fr Markiewicz from the very beginning. It was God's work and will remain so. Whatever God wants to do with us according to His Will, we cannot oppose it. Our task, however, is to bravely bear the crisis of the mission through humility and obedience. Only via these two principles can we be sure that the work is led by the Holy Spirit present in the Church and Her decisions. Only in this way may we fulfil the mission that God gave us through the hands of Fr Markiewicz.

For lay people

Blessed Fr Markiewicz, becomes a special patron for people experiencing a crisis because he himself went through it and found practical solutions. He is a patron for those who doubt God and advises them to overcome all difficulties in prayer.

He is a patron for those who are experiencing a vocational crisis and suggests searching deeper for God's will and reading the Divine signs in life's situations.

Finally, Fr Markiewicz is the patron of people who are experiencing a crisis of their own mission and reminds them of the principles of obedience and humility, thanks to which they may persevere.

Blessed Fr Markiewicz is definitely a man who effectively overcame some of the worst crises ever.

Fr Mateusz Szerszeń CSMA

Part of foreword

The purpose of this book is to provide a glimpse into the life of our founding father, Blessed Father Bronisław Markiewicz. Throughout his ministry he continually strove to understand and discern the will of God in his life, where it was God wanted him to be and what God wanted him to do.

The texts in the book are written in the 19th century and are taken from his personal journey and, as such, Blessed Bronisław probably never intended them to be made public. In a sense they are a reflection of his spiritual journey, personal prayers and conversations with the Lord seeking guidance and direction.

These personal notes that were found are being shared in order to give people a greater insight and understanding of who he was and of his spiritual journey as a priest.

The Michaelite Fathers of the North American Vice-Province took on this project to share the passion for their founder, on this the 100th anniversary of the official recognition of their community by the Church.

Fr Andrzej Kowalczyk CSMA,
Provincial



The most wonderful thing is to follow Christ. There are different states in the Church. The state that is most perfect is that which is most Christ-like. He who wishes to be greater in the kingdom of heaven, should diminish himself.



■ The Shrine of St Michael in Miejsce Piastowe, Poland

Blessed Fr Markiewicz on holiness

Holiness is the love of God and he who is holy is he who possesses the most Divine love.

Thinking of God, having Him in our mind is the easiest means of holiness, which we can use even in illness and in the greatest work, and it will replace other means of salvation as spiritual reading, meditation and prayer!

God's will should be everything to us. Carry it out most faithfully everywhere and even in the smallest things. Therein lies holiness.

The saints spoke briefly and succinctly. Love one another, my little brothers. Let a humble and exemplary life be the first sermon that you preach. What does God wish me to

think at this moment? – ask yourself. Through the heart of Jesus – for His attention.

There is no saint who did not have the spirit of penance. The repentance of the saints showed itself in deeds rather than in words. In carrying out their duties, they humbled and mortified themselves continually in a spirit of conversion.

God's saints gaze at and see God Himself face to face, which is their greatest joy. They also learn the truths of our holy faith, which on earth are covered in mystery, and are now revealed in a bright, supernatural light.

The saints tried to do good deeds at every possible opportunity giving priority to the works of mercy as to the soul. For, as the soul is higher than the body, so also are spiritual works of mercy superior to the corporal. Even when they carried out corporal works of mercy on the body, they did so in such a way that their neighbour's soul would derive the greater benefit.

Give me your wisdom, the wisdom of the saints. I will consider each word before I utter it. (I will speak) only for the glory of God. Let me see things rightly, teach me the innocence of a dove so that I know You and I know myself.

I implore your prayers that I may soon attain sainthood, as such people are

needed everywhere and especially among the Poles. When a nation lacks saints it is plunged into darkness and people lose their way.

More, more – thanks to you. Perfect, everything should be perfect – if you do something for the Eternal God, do so perfectly because He is the best and the highest. I ask you to help me.

I, as a priest, accepted the obligation to become a saint. Therefore, this virtue is to be exercised and perfected.

God – is the highest perfection, the holiest, the wisest, the mighty and the righteous. In order to understand perfection, we people, need to split into a few aspects while God is a perfect unity. For this perfection He is worthy to love Him wholeheartedly.

Focusing on the spirit is the first condition to acquiring holiness. Focus – that is – to watch over your own imagination and memory, and over your own body's senses and direct the soul's powers towards our ultimate goal – towards God.

My ultimate goal: the kingdom of heaven, to attain eternal life. My current goal; purity of heart, serving in purity and holiness of God.

The most perfect God, therefore, deserves to be served with all my might, to the detriment of my health, even if I were to lose my life, even though my

salvation may be uncertain according to a certain great saint.

To strive for oneself – is your first obligation. You have to be like a pond that gives water to a stream and the creatures within it, but does not itself run dry; not a canal serving only to pour water for other streams.

Prudence – first sanctify yourself: do no more than do the will of God.

In the heart of Jesus, I will find how to follow Him. He will give me the grace to imitate Him in the most perfect way.

I could be a holy priest if I said the Holy Mass and the breviary perfectly. Do it slowly, quietly and thoroughly. To say little but to say it well.

I must do everything perfectly: for this I ask help of the saints: St John Berchmans (Jesuit scholastic), St Francis de Sales and the Angelic Doctor of St Thomas.

My heart in heaven: there my rest, there my joy, because my closest friends are in heaven.

Let me learn and be aware of the price and value of the soul in the eyes of God!

Fr Piotr Wojakiewicz CSMA
Some quotes from Daily Reflections
with Blessed Bronislaw Markiewicz
ISBN 978-83-7019-696-7

Growing up in London, England I had a happy childhood, and my Catholic upbringing was a big part of that.

I really loved that we were taught to care for the poor and it always felt special to make collections for things like CAFOD. I also enjoyed being in the church choir as well as special occasions like my first communion where I wore my first ever suit – circa 1974. Sadly, teenage rebelliousness and a personal event left me disappointed in the Church and I drifted away. What really forced a wedge was a sense of cynicism. This led to an attitude that could only see what was bad and not appreciate what was good.

What was merely drifting gathered pace when a religious organisation came into my life with the promise of the key to a more abundant life. I got swept along in the newness of it all, thinking that I was really onto something. But at the end of the day, it was just a cult and there was more emphasis on control and other dubious practices that left me cold. So, I managed to escape this organization and then attended an independent church of no denomination.

Years later I realized that I had swapped one cult for another and that I was not truly free from the “religious addiction” that can hinder a true relationship with God.

Despite all my misgivings about the Catholic Church, whenever I travelled in Europe, I often visited Catholic churches and cathedrals, not to attend Mass, but

Coming home to the Catholic Church

as a tourist who appreciates beauty and craftsmanship. Other times I attended funerals in Catholic churches, and I noticed a certain dignity and love in all the proceedings.

One such occasion was when my father died and for me it was very comforting to experience the love of Jesus from my dear, old, Catholic school friend. It made me really think, in the free church we were all supposed to have a deep and personal relationship with our Lord. How was it then that the greatest evidence of this was in a Catholic?

Sadly, many years passed before I realized the answer. This time had its up and downs, moments that I am proud of and moments that I regret. Many years later, it came to a point where it was too much for me and my wife and we felt very strongly that we should cease our current activities and look to go in another direction. In March 2017, we stopped attending church. But during this time, we did watch a video series from Pater Luc and as he taught there was a Franciscan Crucifix behind him and, as we spent our honeymoon in Assisi, this was a good sign for us, not to mention the warmth and charm of Pater Luc himself.

Eventually we thought about going back to church. We then just thought: why not try a Catholic church? After all my wife and I were both raised Catholic. So we went to

a church that was nearby and again there was a Franciscan Crucifix; again for us a good sign. The day's homily also resonated with us "To be more human as personified by our Lord Jesus", so we really wanted to visit again. However, geographically, this was not our home church, so we decided to try the Catholic parish church where we reside. This, too, was a positive experience, despite many things that were unfamiliar to us. At the end of the day though it still felt like coming home. And our new home is Maria Geburt (Lyss), in Switzerland. At this time a significant help was to read a series of books on the Catholic faith by the late Father Oscar Lukefahr. These books are real gems, easy to read, and covering the most important aspects of the Catholic faith with honesty and humour. On the 4th July 2018 in a small ceremony we were officially re-entered into the Catholic Church.

Now that we are back, I really love the richness of the tradition, especially the things that make the Catholic faith unique. Celebrating the Eucharist is such a privilege. As is Marian devotion and praying the rosary. I have also witnessed many baptisms and as our priests anoint the children it is always special to be reminded what this sacrament means: through the anointing it is expressed that we are royal, prophetic



Jacob Antony

and priestly people, and that the blessing of God rests on us. Through baptism, we are welcomed into the family of God. Welcomed with an inviolable dignity. Welcomed as a unique being of God that can flourish in the world through faith in Jesus Christ and the Holy Catholic Church.

As a child I always thought it was special to be a Catholic and thankfully after all these years that childlike faith has returned.

As a child of God there is a lightness to our relationship with God and each other. But most of all I enjoy the mystery, we do not have to know everything and have an answer for everything. It is just wonderful to embrace the mystery and enjoy everyday life.

David, Switzerland

What does ‘Divine Mercy’ actually mean?

The following is an excerpt from the book, *Divine Mercy: A Guide from Genesis to Benedict XVI*, by Dr Robert Stackpole, STD, and published by Marian Press.

Before we can walk through the story of God’s merciful love for the human race, we need to have some knowledge of what “Divine Mercy” actually means. The phrase presents us with a semantic problem right from the start. After all, the word “mercy” in contemporary English has a very restricted meaning. It is usually used to refer to an act of pardon, as in “Let me off, judge; have mercy!” or “He threw himself on the mercy of the court.” In the Catholic tradition of theology, however, mercy means more than just the cancellation of punishment, far more than that.

Divine Mercy is God’s love reaching down to meet the needs and overcome the miseries of His creatures. The Bible, the teachings of St Thomas Aquinas, and Pope John Paul II all assure us that this is so.

The Old Testament provides us with many images of human misery and of God in His mercy seeking to relieve it. One of the most poignant images of such misery is that of a woman suffering the aching loneliness of having no husband and no children – of being completely bereft in the world. This is the spiritual plight of all of us without God. It was used by the Old Testament prophets

to signify Israel being reduced to utter misery because of her sins and unfaithfulness to the Lord. But this is not the end of the story. The Lord Yahweh Himself has compassion on the woman by marrying her and making her fruitful. He reaches down to the woman in her misery and raises her up. Where there was only despair, loneliness and heartache come joy, fruitfulness and abiding love.

An inspiring example of such steadfast divine love relieving human misery is found in the Old Testament prophet known as Second Isaiah. As he writes, he is encouraging the Jews who are exiles in Babylon not to give up hope that God in His compassion will deliver them:

“Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in travail! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her that is married, says the Lord. Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; hold not back, lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your descendants will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities.

“Fear not, for you will not be ashamed; be not confounded, for you will not be put to shame; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more. For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. For the Lord has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer.

“For this is like the days of Noah to me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you and will not rebuke you. For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you” (Is. 54:1-10).

In the Old Testament, there are two principal Hebrew words that we usually translate as mercy.



First of all, there is the word *hesed*, which means “steadfast love, covenant love.” Someone who has the attribute of *hesed* is someone you can always count on, someone who never lets you down. According to the Catholic Biblical scholar John L. McKenzie, the word *hesed* is often used in Hebrew in connection with other words which bring out its meaning, such as *hesed-emet* (steadfast, dependable love), *hesed-sedekah* (righteous, holy love) and *hesed-yesua* (rescuing, saving love). In a remarkable endnote to his encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* (Rich in Mercy), Pope John Paul II teaches that *hesed* contains the meaning of faithfulness to oneself, to one’s own promises and commitments to others (thus, Professor Scott Hahn’s popular book on the Bible is entitled ‘The Father Who Keeps His Promises’).

The Holy Father writes: “When in the Old Testament the word *hesed* is used of the Lord, this always occurs in connection with the covenant that God established with Israel. This covenant was, on God’s part, a gift and a grace for Israel... God had made a commitment to

respect it [this divine *hesed*] showed itself as what it was at the beginning, that is, as a love that gives, love more powerful than betrayal, grace stronger than sin” (no. 52).

As we have seen in our opening example, in a sense, the whole experience of Israel with God is an experience of His *hesed-love* (Is. 54:10): “For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love [*hesed*] shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord who has compassion on you.” As John L. McKenzie has written: “The entire history of the dealing of Yahweh with Israel can be summed up as *hesed*; it is the dominating motive which appears in his deeds, and the motive which gives unity and intelligibility to all His dealings with men” (Dictionary of the Bible).

The second most common word for God’s mercy in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word *rachamim*: tender, compassionate love, a love that springs from pity. Someone who has *rachamim* is someone who feels for your plight and is moved with compassion to help you. *Rachamim* is

often used in conjunction with *hesed*. It comes from a root word *rechem*, which means a mother’s womb. Thus, there is a special intimacy and responsiveness about this kind of love, and a special concern for the sufferings of others. The Holy Father sees *hesed* as, in a sense, a masculine form of love (steadfast, dependable, righteous, being true to oneself and to one’s promises), while *rachamim* is more feminine (tender, responsive, compassionate, like a mother responding in love to the sufferings of her child).

In the New Testament, the Greek word that is usually translated as “mercy” is the word *eleos*. It can also be translated as loving kindness or tender compassion. The Greek word comes from a root word meaning oil that is poured out. Thus, when the Church sings in her liturgy the Greek words *Kyrie Eleison* and *Christie Eleison*, she is praying that the merciful love of God will be poured out upon her children, like holy oil from above. According to the ancient Fathers of the Church, the Church herself was born from the wounded side of Christ, when out of His heart there poured out blood and water, symbolic of all the graces of the two chief Sacraments, Baptism and the Eucharist (Jn 19:34). In short, *eleos* is God’s love poured out upon His people.

In the Latin tradition, the principal word for mercy is *misericordia*, which means, literally “miserable heart”. Father George Kosicki, CSB, the great Divine Mercy evangelist, once summed up the meaning of this Latin word as follows: *misericordia* means “having a pain in your heart for the pains of others, and taking pains to do something about their pain.”

The most comprehensive statement by the Magisterium on the meaning of Divine Mercy can be found in Pope John Paul II's encyclical letter *Dives in Misericordia* (Rich in Mercy, 1980). In that encyclical, the Holy Father made two very important statements about mercy. First, he wrote, "Mercy is love's second name". Secondly, he taught that mercy is "the greatest attribute of God".

Let us look at each of these statements in turn.

Mercy is Love's Second Name

Here the Pope was not saying anything new. According to the Catholic theological tradition, mercy is a certain kind of love, a certain expression of love.

Love in general might be defined as a sharing and giving of oneself to another, a selfless seeking of the good of another. According to the Polish theologian Fr Ignacy Rozycki:

"Traditional Catholic moral theology treats of the virtue of mercy as flowing from love of neighbour. Namely, it is that virtue which inclines us to offer assistance to a person suffering from want or misery. This being so, 'mercy' in moral theology ... is not love itself but love's result and extension" (quoted in *Pillars of Fire in my Soul: the Spirituality of St Faustina*, Marian Press, 2003, p. 95).

Thus, playing games with one's children, or enjoying and sharing conjugal love with one's spouse, or singing the praises of the Lord at Holy Eucharist, while each of these acts would be considered acts of

"love" of various kinds, ordinarily we would not call them acts of "mercy". On the other hand, giving bread to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, and shelter to the homeless – or indeed bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to the lost and the broken – these are all acts of merciful love: love reaching down to lift people out of their physical and spiritual miseries.

Mercy is the Greatest Attribute of God

Pope John Paul II wrote in *Dives in Misericordia*: "The Bible, Tradition, and the whole faith life of the People of God provide unique proof that mercy is the greatest of the attributes and perfections of God" (no. 13). As we shall see later in this book, the Pope was reiterating here the teaching of St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas. But we still may want to know how this can be true.

How can any of God's perfections be "greater" than any other? According to the Christian philosophical tradition and the definition of God given at the First Vatican Council, God is one, simple, spiritual, infinitely perfect act of Being. He does not have "parts" as bodily creatures do. Rather, each of His perfections – such as His love, His goodness, His power, and His wisdom – is just another name for what He is.

The Polish theologian Fr Ignacy Rozycki explained it like this: "In this sense, all of God's attributes are God, one and the same. For this reason, all are absolutely equal to each other. Divine Mercy is as infinitely perfect as His Wisdom or Power, for it is

likewise God, and the same God, just as Divine Wisdom and Divine Power are God" (*Pillars of Fire*, p. 96).

In other words, God does not just do merciful things sometimes, nor does He have a merciful "side" to His character, as a human being might have. On the contrary, He is always and everywhere and at all times merciful. Everything He does is an expression of His Mercy – and of all of His other attributes too, all at once. All of His attributes are eternally in action!

But then Fr Rozycki goes on to write: "If, on the other hand, mercy is understood in the Biblical sense as functional, then, even though it is called an attribute, it first of all denotes the results of the infinite and eternal love of God in world history, and especially in the history of mankind's salvation.

In fact, both *hesed* (mercy in the Old Testament), as well as *eleos* (mercy in the New Testament) signify active manifestations of God's love toward mankind. In the Old Testament the manifestations found their expression in the calling and directing of the chosen people, and in the New Testament they were found in the sending of the Son of God into the world and in the entire work of redemption. This Biblically formulated relationship between love and mercy is expressed by [St] Faustina in the words: 'Love is the flower, mercy the fruit' (*Diary*, 948).

So, if we understand mercy in the Biblical sense, then without any fear of error contrary to the faith, it can be said that mercy is the greatest attribute of God [in other words] within this Biblical understanding, the results of the activity of merciful love are the greatest in the world

and in this respect, mercy surpasses all other Divine attributes” (Pillars of Fire, p. 96).

Another way to express this insight would be as follows: Divine Mercy is supremely manifest in all of God’s actions toward mankind, and to show mercy must be the motive and intention behind all of God’s actions in the world.

Drawing upon the Biblical words for mercy, and upon the magisterial teachings of Pope John Paul II, therefore, let us try to formulate a clear definition of what we mean by “Divine Mercy”.

According to the first epistle of St John, “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). He is infinite, eternal, self-giving love within His own being, among the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. From all eternity, therefore, within His own infinite essence, He enjoys the fullness of love given, love received and love returned. He enjoyed that fullness of perfect love before He ever made the world – and even if He had never made any world at all, He still would have enjoyed this perfect beatitude of eternal love, for “God is love”.

In the infinite, eternal love that He is, in the inner life of the Blessed Trinity, there is no need for “mercy”, for there is no “want” or “misery” or “suffering” that needs to be overcome in the Infinitely Perfect Being. What then is Divine Mercy?

St Thomas Aquinas defined mercy in general as “the compassion in our hearts for another person’s misery, a compassion which drives us to do what we can to help him” (ST II-II.30.1). Divine Mercy, therefore, is the form that God’s eternal love takes when He reaches out to us in

the midst of our need and our brokenness. Whatever the nature of our need or our misery might be – sin, guilt, suffering or death – He is always ready to pour out His merciful, compassionate love for us, to help in time of need: In fact, God’s love for His creatures always takes the form of merciful love. As we read in the Psalms (25:10) “all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth” and again (145:9), “His tender mercies are over all His works.”

When He created the world ex nihilo, therefore, and holds it in being at every moment, it is an act of merciful love: His merciful love overcoming the potential nothingness, the possible non-existence of all things.

When the divine Son became incarnate and dwelt among us, that was an act of merciful love too: His merciful love in sharing our lot, showing us the way to the Father and making the perfect offering for our sins.

When He sends His Holy Spirit into our hearts to refresh and sanctify us, that, too, is His merciful love: His merciful love pouring into our hearts the power to grow in faith, hope and love, and to serve him with joy. Psalm 136 says it best. While celebrating all the works of the Lord in creation and redemption, the psalm bears the constant refrain: “for His mercy endures forever” (Robert Stackpole, *Jesus, Mercy Incarnate*, Marian Press, 2000, p. 112).

Robert Stackpole, STD

The director of the John Paul II Institute of Divine Mercy, an apostolate of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception.

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Jacek Kawa

■ St Faustina’s reliquary

The gift of confession

**Of all the Sacraments we receive
Confession is the most unpopular.**

The majority of us do not like to admit we are wrong, that we are sinners? Jesus knows how beneficial it is for us to be honest with God and ourselves and to admit that we are sinners and to be sorry for our sins, and so He gave us this wonderful Sacrament. Where is the scriptural basis for the Sacrament of Confession? We have it in today's Gospel when Jesus said the words, "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven and whose sins you shall retain they are retained." It was on Easter Sunday that Jesus gave to His Apostles the power to forgive others their sins. How could the Apostles forgive people their sins unless they first confess them and express their sorrow?

The Church knows that people find going to Confession hard and so has laid down the bare minimum for us. So as not to lose touch with Christ and His Church we are expected to make our Easter duties. This means that we must go to Holy Communion between Ash Wednesday and Trinity Sunday. If we only go to Communion once a year it is very likely that we shall offend God or our neighbour in a serious manner and so we are obliged to go to Confession before we can go to Holy Communion.

To commit a serious sin three conditions must be present: It must be something of a serious nature, you must know it is serious, and the thirdly, you give it your full consent. If one of these conditions is not present it is not a serious sin.



Peter van Briel, www.pixabay.com

Examples of serious sins are deliberately to miss Mass on Sunday or a Holyday of Obligation; to rob a person of a day's wage; to commit adultery or fornication, that is, living together before marriage; to abort or to help a person to abort a baby; self-abuse; serious character assassination...the list is endless.

To go to Holy Communion with a serious sin on your soul is to commit a sacrilege, another mortal sin. It is not enough to make an act of contrition. You must go to Confession first. If you have a venial sin on your soul it is sufficient to make an act of contrition and receive Holy Communion.

Monthly confession

When anyone comes to Confession and says, "Please Father, it is six

months since my last Confession," I say to them, "Here is something to think about. Pope John Paul II said, 'If we don't go to Confession once a month we are not taking our spiritual life seriously!'"

Now why should Pope John Paul say that? I can think of three good reasons. The first reason is, when we go to Confession it is to Jesus we confess our sins, so that in itself is a good reason for going.

The second reason is because every time we go to Confession Jesus not only forgives us our sins but He also gives us an increase of grace and all the help we need for the future for we never know what is around the corner.

I have known people who go to Mass every day and then one day they go their doctor and after examining them he or she is told, "I am

sorry to have to tell you that you have cancer and you have less than six months to live.” Or one of their loved ones dies. They find this too hard to accept and they say to the Lord, “Is this how you treat your friends? I went to Mass and Holy Communion every day and you give me this heavy cross. I want nothing more to do with You.” They turn their back on God. Monthly Confession is one of the ways of building up a personal relationship with God, so that no matter what hits us we will never turn our back on Him.

One way ticket

The third reason is that monthly Confession is our ticket to heaven. I can't imagine if we make a good Confession every month Our Lord saying to us when we die, “I don't know you!” Rather I can hear Him say, “I know you. Every month you came to Confession to tell me how sorry you were for your sins. Come on, heaven is waiting for you.”

Christ's gift

These are the three reasons why we should go to Confession twelve times a year, once a month.

Confession is Christ's gift to us whereby we can be sure that God has forgiven us our sins. There are people of other faiths who would love to have this assurance. Let us make great use of this Sacrament every month.

Fr **Francis Maple** O.F.M. Cap.
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Respect for conceived life

St Pope John Paul II defended human life from the moment of conception to the natural death of a person.

In 1995, Pope John Paul II, wrote the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (EV) in defence of all life. He wrote, ‘God proclaims that he is absolute Lord of the life of man, who is formed in his image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26-28). Human life is thus given a sacred and inviolable character, which reflects the inviolability of the Creator himself. Precisely for this reason God will severely judge every violation of the commandment “You shall not kill”, the commandment which is at the basis of all life together in society. He is the “goel”, the defender of the innocent (cf. Gen 4:9-15; Is 41:14; Jer 50:34; Ps 19:14). God thus shows that he does not delight in the death of the living (cf. Wis 1:13). Only Satan can delight therein: for through his envy death entered the world (cf. Wis 2:24). He who is “a murderer from the beginning”, is also “a liar and the father of lies” (Jn 8:44). By deceiving man he leads him to projects of sin and death, making them appear as goals and fruits of life. (EV, 53)

The defenceless

In paragraphs 58-63 of EV he expanded his teaching on the value and inviolability of human life in the

womb, conceived life. This teaching has become even more relevant today as there are increasing efforts to promote abortion up to birth and even to allow infanticide under the law.

Pope St John Paul II states, ‘Among all the crimes which can be committed against life, procured abortion has characteristics making it particularly serious and deplorable. The Second Vatican Council defines abortion, together with infanticide, as an “unspeakable crime”. (EV, 58).

Moral gravity obscured in people's consciences

The pope highlights how ‘the perception of its [abortion's] gravity has become progressively obscured in many people's consciences’ and that ‘acceptance of abortion in the popular mind, in behaviour and even in law itself, is a telling sign of an extremely dangerous crisis of the moral sense, which is becoming more and more incapable of distinguishing between good and evil, even when the fundamental right to life is at stake.’ He goes on to state, ‘Given such a grave situation, we need

now more than ever to have the courage to look truth in the eye and to call things by their proper name, without yielding to convenient compromises or to the temptation of self-deception. In this regard the reproach of the Prophet is extremely straightforward: “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness” (Is 5:20).’

St Pope John Paul II draws attention, ‘especially in the case of abortion’ to the ‘widespread use of ambiguous terminology ... which tends to hide abortion’s true nature and to attenuate

its seriousness in public opinion. ... But no word has the power to change the reality of things: procured abortion is the deliberate and direct killing, by whatever means it is carried out, of a human being in the initial phase of his or her existence, extending from conception to birth. The moral gravity of procured abortion is apparent in all its truth if we recognize that we are dealing with murder... The one eliminated is a human being at the very beginning of life. No one more absolutely innocent could be imagined. In no way could this human being ever be considered an aggressor, much less an unjust aggressor! He or she is weak, defenceless, even to the point of lacking that minimal form of defence consisting in the poignant power of a new-born baby’s cries and tears. The unborn child is totally entrusted to the protection and care of the woman carrying him or her in the womb.’ (EV, 58)

Decision making and responsibility

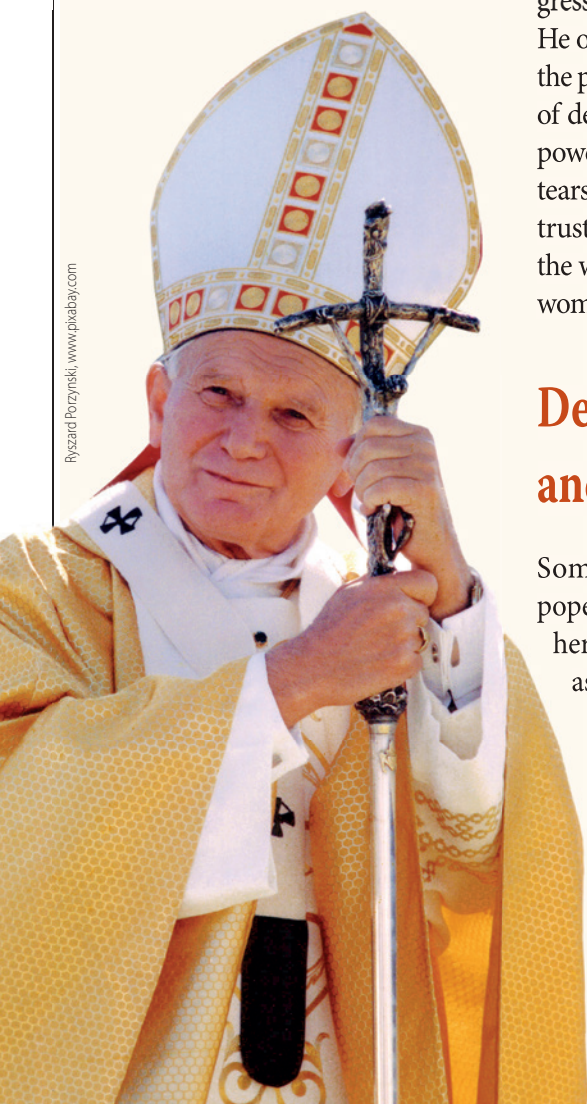
Sometimes, unfortunately, as the pope states, ‘It is precisely the mother herself who makes the decision and asks for the child to be eliminated, and who then goes about having it done.’ And while acknowledging that the reasons for making such a decision may be serious and tragic, he points out that they ‘can never justify the deliberate killing of an innocent human being.’ (EV, 58)

But the mothers are often not the only ones who are involved in the decision to abort the child in the womb. The father and even the extended

members of the mother’s family have a great influence on the decision of the mother who may even exert pressure on her to have an abortion.

St Pope John Paul II continues, ‘Nor can one overlook the pressures which sometimes come from the wider family circle and from friends. Sometimes the woman is subjected to such strong pressure that she feels psychologically forced to have an abortion: certainly in this case moral responsibility lies particularly with those who have directly or indirectly obliged her to have an abortion. Doctors and nurses are also responsible, when they place at the service of death skills which were acquired for promoting life.

But responsibility likewise falls on the legislators who have promoted and approved abortion laws, and, to the extent that they have a say in the matter, on the administrators of the health-care centres where abortions are performed. A general and no less serious responsibility lies with those who have encouraged the spread of an attitude of sexual permissiveness and a lack of esteem for motherhood, and with those who should have ensured -but did not – effective family and social policies in support of families, especially larger families and those with particular financial and educational needs. Finally, one cannot overlook the network of complicity which reaches out to include international institutions, foundations and associations which systematically campaign for the legalization and spread of abortion in the world. In this sense abortion goes beyond the responsibility of individuals and beyond the harm done to them, and takes on a distinctly social dimension. It is a most serious wound inflicted on society and its culture by the very people who ought to be society’s promoters and defenders.



■ St John Paul II, the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church in 1978-2005

As I wrote in my Letter to Families, “we are facing an immense threat to life: not only to the life of individuals but also to that of civilization itself”. We are facing what can be called a “structure of sin” which opposes human life not yet born’ (EV, 59).

Individual human person

Responding to the claim that the result of conception, at least up to a certain number of days, cannot yet be considered a personal human life, the pope quotes from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “from the time that the ovum is fertilized, a life is begun which is neither that of the father nor the mother; it is rather the life of a new human being with his own growth. It would never be made human if it were not human already. This has always been clear, and ... modern genetic science offers clear confirmation. It has demonstrated that from the first instant there is established the programme of what this living being will be: a person, this individual person with his characteristic aspects already well determined. Right from fertilization the adventure of a human life begins, and each of its capacities requires time – a rather lengthy time – to find its place and to be in a position to act”. He continues, again quoting from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, ‘Even if the presence of a spiritual soul cannot be ascertained by empirical data, the results themselves of scientific research on the human embryo provide “a valuable indication for discerning by the use of reason a personal presence at the moment of the first appearance of a human life:

how could a human individual not be a human person?”

‘What is at stake is so important that, from the standpoint of moral obligation, the mere probability that a human person is involved would suffice to justify an absolutely clear prohibition of any intervention aimed at killing a human embryo. Precisely for this reason, over and above all scientific debates and those philosophical affirmations to which the Magisterium has not expressly committed itself, the Church has always taught and continues to teach that the result of human procreation, from the first moment of its existence, must be guaranteed that unconditional respect which is morally due to the human being in his or her totality and unity as body and spirit: “The human being is to be respected and treated as a person from the moment of conception; and therefore from that same moment his rights as a person must be recognized, among which in the first place is the inviolable right of every innocent human being to life” (CDF, 1987)’ (EV, 60).

Sacred Scripture

St Pope John Paul II points out that ‘the texts of Sacred Scripture show such great respect for the human being in

the mother’s womb that they require as a logical consequence that God’s commandment “You shall not kill” be extended to the unborn child as well’, and he cites the Prophet Jeremiah and others after Jeremiah. “The word of the Lord came to me saying: ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations”’ (1:4-5); the Psalmist, who addresses the Lord in these words: “Upon you I have leaned from my birth; you are he who took me from my mother’s womb” (Ps 71:6; cf. Is 46:3; Job 10:8-12; Ps 22:10-11), and the Evangelist Luke – in the magnificent episode of the meeting of the two mothers, Elizabeth and Mary, and their two sons, John the Baptist and Jesus, still hidden in their mothers’ wombs (cf. 1:39-45) – emphasizes how even before their birth the two little ones are able to communicate: the child recognizes the coming of the Child and leaps for joy... (Note 60).

‘Human life is sacred and inviolable at every moment of existence, including the initial phase which precedes birth. All human beings, from their mothers’ womb, belong to God who searches them and knows them, who forms them and knits them together with his own hands, who gazes on them when they are tiny shapeless



Kelly Sikkema, www.unsplash.com



Kelly Sikkema, www.unsplash.com

embryos and already sees in them the adults of tomorrow whose days are numbered and whose vocation is even now written in the “book of life” (cf. Ps 139: 1, 13-16). When they are still in their mothers’ womb they are the personal objects of God’s loving and fatherly providence.’ (*EV*, 61)

Christian tradition

St Pope John Paul further outlines how Christian Tradition is clear and unanimous, from the beginning up to our own day, in describing abortion as a particularly grave moral disorder. ‘From its first contacts with the Greco-Roman world, where abortion and infanticide were widely practised, the first Christian community, by its teaching and practice, radically opposed the customs rampant in that society, ... The Greek ecclesiastical writer, Athenagoras, records that Christians consider as murderesses

women who have recourse to abortifacient medicines, because children, even if they are still in their mother’s womb, “are already under the protection of Divine Providence”. [The Latin author], Tertullian, affirms: “It is anticipated murder to prevent someone from being born; it makes little difference whether one kills a soul already born or puts it to death at birth. He who will one day be a man is a man already”. Throughout Christianity’s two-thousand-year history, this same doctrine has been constantly taught by the Fathers of the Church and by her Pastors and Doctors.’ (*EV*, 61)

‘More recent Papal Magisterium has vigorously reaffirmed this common doctrine. Pius XI, in ... *Casti Connubii*, rejected the specious justifications of abortion. Pius XII excluded all direct abortion, i.e., every act tending directly to destroy human life in the womb “whether such destruction is intended as an end or only as a means to an end” (1944, 1951).

John XXIII reaffirmed that human life is sacred because “from its very beginning it directly involves God’s creative activity” (1961). The Second Vatican Council sternly condemned abortion: “From the moment of its conception life must be guarded with the greatest care, while abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes” (*Gaudium et Spes*).

Sanctions

‘The Church’s canonical discipline, from the earliest centuries, has inflicted penal sanctions on those guilty of abortion. This practice, with more or less severe penalties, has been confirmed in various periods of history. The 1917 Code of Canon Law punished abortion with excommunication. The revised canonical legislation continues this tradition when it decrees that “a person who actually procures an abortion incurs automatic (*latae sententiae*) excommunication”. The

excommunication affects all those who commit this crime with knowledge of the penalty attached, and thus includes those accomplices without whose help the crime would not have been committed. By this reiterated sanction, the Church makes clear that abortion is a most serious and dangerous crime, thereby encouraging those who commit it to seek without delay the path of conversion. In the Church the purpose of the penalty of excommunication is to make an individual fully aware of the gravity of a certain sin and then to foster genuine conversion and repentance.

Given such unanimity in the doctrinal and disciplinary tradition of the Church, Paul VI was able to declare that this tradition is unchanged and unchangeable (*Humanae Vitae*). Therefore, by the authority which Christ conferred upon Peter and his successors, in communion with the bishops – who on various occasions have condemned abortion and who in the aforementioned consultation, albeit dispersed throughout the world, have shown unanimous agreement concerning this doctrine – I declare that direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, always constitutes a grave moral disorder, since it is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being. This doctrine is based upon the natural law and upon the written Word of God, is transmitted by the Church's Tradition and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium (*Lumen Gentium*).

No circumstance, no purpose, no law whatsoever can ever make licit an act which is intrinsically illicit, since it is contrary to the Law of God which is written in every human heart, knowable by reason itself, and proclaimed by the Church.' (EV, 62)

Intervention on human embryos

St Pope John Paul II states that, 'this evaluation of the morality of abortion is to be applied also to the recent forms of intervention on human embryos which, although carried out for purposes legitimate in themselves, inevitably involve the killing of those embryos. This is the case with experimentation on embryos, which is becoming increasingly widespread in the field of biomedical research and is legally permitted in some countries. Although "one must uphold as licit procedures carried out on the human embryo which respect the life and integrity of the embryo and do not involve disproportionate risks for it, but rather are directed to its healing, the improvement of its condition of health, or its individual survival" (CDF), it must nonetheless be stated that the use of human embryos or fetuses as an object of experimentation constitutes a crime against their dignity as human beings who have a right to the same respect owed to a child once born, just as to every person (*Charter of the Rights of the Family* – 22 October 1983).

This moral condemnation also regards procedures that exploit living human embryos and fetuses – sometimes specifically "produced" for this purpose by in vitro fertilization – either to be used as "biological material" or as providers of organs or tissue for transplants in the treatment of certain diseases. The killing of innocent human creatures, even if carried out to help others, constitutes an absolutely unacceptable act.' (EV, 63)

Phil Kerins, Scotland

Source of article:
Evangelium Vitae, John Paul II, 1995

Prayer

Good Father, You are the Creator of the world. Out of love You made mankind. And You continue to give life. I thank you for the gift of life. I thank You for all those who bravely proclaim the truth about the divine origin of life, and who are not afraid of calling acts directed against life a sin.

St John Paul II said that the measure of a civilisation – the universal, atemporal measure applicable to all cultures – is its attitude to life. A civilisation which rejects the defenceless deserves to be called barbarous, even if it should have great economic, technological, artistic and scientific achievements.

Through the intercession of St John Paul II, an undaunted defender of life, I beseech You, Father, let no-one do violence to the defenceless. I pray for the legislators, that they refrain from legalising the slaughter of unborn children. I pray for women, who are mothers, and for men, who are fathers, that they may love their children and not treat the life of their fellow humans, the ones who are their closest relatives, as a threat. I pray for doctors, that they may not abandon their role as defenders of life and turn into executioners. I pray that human beings, especially those who say they believe in You, may cherish Your gift. Amen

Taken from *A Book of Prayers Through the intercession of Saint John Paul II*, Rafael, Krakow, 2014, p58-60

To you, O blessed Joseph

Ad te, beate Ioseph

To you, O blessed Joseph, do we come in our tribulation, and having implored the help of your most holy spouse, we confidently invoke your patronage also. Through that charity which bound you to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God and through the paternal love with which you embraced the Child Jesus, we humbly beg you graciously to regard the inheritance which Jesus Christ has purchased by His Blood, and with your power and strength to aid us in our necessities.

O most watchful Guardian of the Holy Family, defend the chosen children of Jesus Christ; O most loving father, ward off from us every contagion of error and corrupting influence; O our most mighty protector, be propitious to us and from heaven assist us in our struggle with the power of darkness; and, as once you rescued the Child Jesus from deadly peril, so now protect God's Holy Church from the snares of the enemy and from all adversity; shield, too, each one of us by your constant protection, so that, supported by your example and your aid, we may be able to live piously, to die holily, and to obtain eternal happiness in heaven. Amen.

This prayer to Saint Joseph, spouse of the Virgin Mary, foster father of Jesus, and patron saint of the universal Church, was composed by Pope Leo XIII in his 1889 encyclical, *Quamquam pluries*. He asked that it be added to the end of the Rosary, especially during the month of October, which is dedicated to the Rosary. He attached an indulgence to it. He also recommended dedicating the month of March to St Joseph, with daily spiritual exercises of piety in his honour, and to observe at least a triduum of prayers preceding the Feast of St Joseph – March 19th.

The prayer may be said after the customary *Salve Regina* and concluding prayer, and may also be used to conclude other Marian devotions.

It may also be said on his various feast days or other devotional days dedicated to St Joseph:

- December 27, the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph;
- March 19, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary;
- May 1, the Optional Memorial of Saint Joseph the Worker;
- the nineteenth day of each month;
- every Wednesday, the traditional day of the week for devotions to Saint Joseph;
- “St Joseph Sunday” and suitable days of other liturgical rites in the Eastern Catholic Churches.

Matthew and Luke, the two Evangelists who speak most of Joseph, tell us very little, yet enough for us to appreciate what sort of father he was, and the mission entrusted to him by God's providence.

I would like to share some personal reflections on this extraordinary figure, so close to our own human experience. For, as Jesus says, “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Mt. 12:34). My desire to do so increased during these months of pandemic, when we experienced, amid the crisis, how “our lives are woven together and sustained by ordinary people, people often overlooked. People who do not appear in newspaper and magazine headlines, or on the latest television show, yet in these very days are surely shaping the decisive events of our history. Doctors, nurses, storekeepers and supermarket workers, cleaning personnel, caregivers, transport workers, men and women working to provide essential services and public safety, volunteers, priests, men and women religious, and so very many others. They understood that no one is saved alone... How many people daily exercise patience and offer hope, taking care to spread not panic, but shared responsibility. How many fathers, mothers, grandparents and teachers are showing our children, in small everyday ways, how to accept and deal with a crisis by adjusting their routines, looking ahead and encouraging the practice of prayer. How many are praying, making sacrifices and interceding for the good of all”.

With a father's heart

Each of us can discover in Joseph – the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence – an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble. St Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation. A word of recognition and of gratitude is due to them all.

A father in the shadows

The Polish writer Jan Dobraczyński, in his book, 'The Shadow of the Father', tells the story of St Joseph's life in the form of a novel. He uses the evocative image of a shadow to define Joseph. In his relationship to Jesus, Joseph was the earthly shadow of the heavenly Father: he watched over him and protected him, never leaving him to go his own way. We can think of Moses' words to Israel: "In the wilderness... you saw how the Lord your God carried you, just as one carries a child, all the way that you travelled" (Deut. 1:31). In a similar way, Joseph acted as a father for his whole life.

Fathers are not born, but made. A man does not become a father simply by bringing a child into the world, but by taking up the responsibility to care for that child. Whenever a man accepts responsibility for the life of another, in some way he becomes a father to that person.

Children today often seem orphans, lacking fathers. The Church,



■ The dream of St Joseph by Gerard Seghers, circa 1624 and 1633

too, needs fathers. St Paul's words to the Corinthians remain timely: "Though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers" (1 Cor. 4:15). Every priest or bishop should be able to add, with the Apostle: "I became your father in Christ Jesus through the

Gospel" (ibid). Paul, likewise, calls the Galatians: "My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!" (4:19).

Being a father entails introducing children to life and reality. Not holding them back, being overprotective or possessive, but rather making them

capable of deciding for themselves, enjoying freedom and exploring new possibilities. Perhaps for this reason, Joseph is traditionally called a “most chaste” father. That title is not simply a sign of affection, but the summation of an attitude that is the opposite of possessiveness. Chastity is freedom from possessiveness in every sphere of one’s life. Only when love is chaste, is it truly love. A possessive love ultimately becomes dangerous: it imprisons, constricts and makes for misery. God himself loved humanity with a chaste love; he left us free even to go astray and set ourselves against him. The logic of love is always the logic of freedom, and Joseph knew how to love with extraordinary freedom. He never made himself the centre of things. He did not think of himself, but focused instead on the lives of Mary and Jesus.

Joseph found happiness not in mere self-sacrifice but in self-gift. In him, we never see frustration but only trust. His patient silence was the prelude to concrete expressions of trust. Our world today needs fathers. It has no use for tyrants who would dominate others as a means of compensating for their own needs. It rejects those who confuse authority with authoritarianism, service with servility, discussion with oppression, charity with a welfare mentality, power with destruction. Every true vocation is born of the gift of oneself, which is the fruit of mature sacrifice. The priesthood and consecrated life likewise require this kind of maturity. Whatever our vocation, whether to marriage, celibacy or virginity, our gift of self will not come to fulfilment if it stops at sacrifice; were that the case, instead of becoming a sign of the beauty and joy of love, the gift of self would risk



■ Pope Francis

being an expression of unhappiness, sadness and frustration.

When fathers refuse to live the lives of their children for them, new and unexpected vistas open up. Every child is the bearer of a unique mystery that can only be brought to light with the help of a father who respects that child’s freedom. A father who realizes that he is most a father and educator at the point when he becomes “useless”, when he sees that his child has become independent and can walk the paths of life unaccompanied. When he becomes like Joseph, who always knew that his child was not his own but had merely been entrusted to his care. In the end, this is what Jesus would have us understand when he says: “Call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven” (Mt. 23:9).

In every exercise of our fatherhood, we should always keep in mind that it has nothing to do with possession, but is rather a “sign” pointing to a greater fatherhood. In a way, we are all like Joseph: a shadow of the heavenly Father, who “makes his sun rise on the

evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mt. 5:45). And a shadow that follows his Son.

The aim of this Apostolic Letter is to increase our love for this great saint, to encourage us to implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and his zeal.

Indeed, the proper mission of the saints is not only to obtain miracles and graces, but to intercede for us before God, like Abraham and Moses, and like Jesus, the “one mediator” (1 Tim. 2:5), who is our “advocate” with the Father (1 Jn 2:1) and who “always lives to make intercession for [us]” (Heb. 7:25; cf. Rom. 8:34).

The saints help all the faithful “to strive for the holiness and the perfection of their particular state of life”. Their lives are concrete proof that it is possible to put the Gospel into practice.

Jesus told us: “Learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart” (Mt. 11:29). The lives of the saints too are examples to be imitated. Saint Paul

explicitly says this: “Be imitators of me!” (1 Cor. 4:16). By his eloquent silence, Saint Joseph says the same.

Before the example of so many holy men and women, Saint Augustine asked himself: “What they could do, can you not also do?” And so he drew closer to his definitive conversion, when he could exclaim: “Late have I loved you, Beauty ever ancient, ever new!”

We need only ask Saint Joseph for the grace of graces: our conversion.

Let us now make our prayer to him:

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. To you God entrusted his only Son; in you Mary placed her trust; with you Christ became man.

Blessed Joseph, to us too, show yourself a father and guide us in the path of life.

Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage, and defend us from every evil. Amen.

Pope Francis

Given in Rome, at St John Lateran, on 8th December, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the year 2020, the eighth of my Pontificate.

“I do not remember even now that I have ever asked anything of [St Joseph] which he has failed to grant... To other saints the Lord seems to have given grace to succour us in some of our necessities, but of this glorious saint my experience is that he succours us in them all...”

St Teresa of Avila

A litany to all the angels

Nine invocation reflections on each salutation

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

The first *salutation* reflection – *The celestial Choir of the Seraphim*. We ask for the spirit of charity, that the Lord make us worthy to burn with the fire of perfect charity.

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)

The second *salutation* reflection – *The celestial Choir of Cherubim*. We ask for the Lord to grant us the special grace to run in the path of Christian perfection. We all strive for perfection. In our Christian lives we do not want to offend God by our sins, we want to follow Jesus in the best possible way to express our love for Him.

2 By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Cherubim, may the Lord

vouchsafe to grant us grace to leave the way of wickedness, to run in the paths of Christian perfection. Amen.

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

The third *salutation* reflection – *The celestial Choir of Thrones*. These angels are always in the presence of God and are the angels of pure humility, peace and submission. Being intensely humble, an attribute that allows them to dispense justice with perfect objectivity and without fear of pride or ambition, the Thrones represent Divine Majesty. We ask the Lord for the spirit of humility. Satan is the angel of pride. The angels from the choir of Thrones, who belong to such a high choir are angels who are humble and accept their position in life. Humility means the truth.

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)

The fourth *salutation* reflection – *The celestial Choir of Dominions*. Most people have a passion of some sort – it could be an unruly passion which we are not able to keep under control but, it keeps us under its

control and overpowers our senses. We ask the Choir of Dominions to intercede to the Lord to look with an eye of mercy on my miserable soul overruled by so many passions, stained by so many sins, and obtain for me grace to overcome the former and detest the latter; that having once risen to a new life I may never again fall into such an unhappy state.

4 By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Dominions, may the Lord give us the grace to govern our senses and subdue our unruly passions. Amen.
(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

The fifth *salutation* reflection – *The celestial Choir of Powers*. The fallen angels are very cunning. This is the reason why we need protection against the snares of the devil. Obtain for me, I beg of you, the grace to discover all the snares, and resist all the attacks of these angels of darkness, so that triumphing after your example over them, I may merit to shine one day on that seat of glory in heaven. Let us ask for this grace through the intercession of the Choir of Powers.

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)

The sixth *salutation* reflection – *The celestial Choir of Virtues*. This choir represents unshaken fortitude in the cause of God. They provide courage, grace, valour, heroic deeds, and we may go to them and ask for aid in the struggle for good against evil. Each day when we recite the Lord's Prayer we say "Lead us

not into temptation . . ." In this invocation we will ask the Choir of Virtues for God's grace so that we will be delivered from evil and obtain enough strength not to give in to temptation.

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)

The seventh *salutation* reflection – *The celestial Choir of Principalities*. They have been assigned the care and rule of the universe. They are the guardians of all earthly kingdoms,

watching over nations, provinces, dioceses, religious communities in order to avert them from the effects of divine wrath. The holy angels were obedient to God. They obeyed His will. In the Lord's Prayer we say, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven . . ." We will ask the Lord through the celestial Choir of Principalities for obedience to the will of God in all circumstances in our lives.

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)



■ The Ghent Altarpiece by Jan van Eyck, 1432

The eighth *salutation* reflection – *The celestial Choir of Archangels*. It is very easy to start or begin something but, we should strive to accomplish the mission, to be persistent and consistent until the end to fulfil the mission: to have the grace to be persistent in faith and all good works. We ask the Lord for the intercession of the Choir of Archangels. We also ask the most glorious Archangel, St Michael, who with more than paternal eagerness descends compassionately into the suffering Kingdom of Purgatory to free the souls of the elect, and transport them into eternal happiness. We also ask him to obtain for us, through leading a holy and fervent life, that we may gain the merits and be transported with him into eternal happiness, in Paradise.

8 By the intercession of the most glorious 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)

The ninth *salutation* reflection – *The celestial Choir of Angels*. We pray in the plural number, we do not pray for ourselves but for all people to be guided. We implore you to enlighten, console, defend and assist souls in all their necessities, to overcome all the obstacles which are met at every step in the perilous desert of this world. In this invocation we ask the Choir of Angels for their guidance into the glory of heaven.

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



■ The angelic choirs circling the abode of God, from Dante's *Paradiso*, illustrated by Gustave Doré

mortal life and conducted hereafter to eternal glory. Amen.

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

We ask for the invocation of four important angels in the history of salvation to help us on our way towards heaven. We pray one Our Father in honour of each angel.

Recite on the next four beads:

Our Father, in honour of St Michael
Our Father, in honour of St Gabriel
Our Father, in honour of St Raphael
Our Father, in honour of Guardian Angel

Prayer to St Michael

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.

Final prayer to St Michael

“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 power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all evil spirits who wander through the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.”

Fr Peter Prusakiewicz CSMA

Our precious little son Michael

Each day, together, we prayed with faith the Rosary and the Prayer to St Michael by Pope Leo XIII.

At the beginning of 2020, on January 2nd, we received a call from our adoption agency informing us that we had been matched with a precious little boy in South Korea who was 13 months old. We received adorable photos and fell in love with him instantly. We were told his Korean name was *MinkYoo*, and that *Mink* means “wise,” and *Yoo*, “of good behaviour.” We loved his Korean name and its meaning and decided to keep it as his middle name, but wanted to choose an English name for him as well.

We called him Michael

We decided right away that his English name should be Michael because it matched well with his Korean name, but more importantly, so that we might ask for the special protection of St Michael for his life. Little did we know then, at the start of 2020, how badly we would need the protection of heaven’s Warrior Archangel just to bring Michael safely home.



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You have probably heard that the adoption process tends to be long and stressful. You may have also heard that international adoption is even more so – by far. So, when you add a global pandemic to the mix, well, you get a perfect storm.

We knew at the start of 2020 that it would take anywhere from six to eleven months before we actually got to meet Michael in South Korea and bring him home. What we did not know was how much the “world as we knew it” would change in 2020 and how many things we never could have imagined happening, did happen. International travel would come to an abrupt stop, numerous events around the world, like the Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo, would be postponed or cancelled altogether,

and countless restrictions would be announced. If someone had told us that all of this, and more, was going to happen, we would have thought our adoption process would surely be delayed and adversely affected. But somehow, miraculously, and against all odds, our adoption process carried on and only eight months later we were on our way to South Korea to bring our son home!

It was not an easy journey. Not for one day during those eight long months did we feel truly certain that we would ACTUALLY be able to travel halfway around the world. Our anxiety grew with each passing day as things seemed to get worse in so many countries, and so many hurdles came our way, all of which we would have to overcome.

God was close to us

Yet, as the storms grew only stronger, God remained faithful every step of the way, perfectly assembling all the pieces of the puzzle, even to the smallest detail, to ensure we were able to get our boy. In February, 2020, just as things were starting to heat up on account of the pandemic, we met one dear and very faithful lady through our church. She was spending the winter in our area and was about to return north.

After hearing about our story and the many challenges that lay ahead, the lady said she had a white relic stone of St Michael from the shrine in Mont Sant'Angelo, Italy, and kindly decided to loan this relic to us until she returned again the following winter – all with the hope that our son Michael would be home with us by then.

St Michael brought reassurance

Every day, together, we prayed with faith the Rosary to Our Blessed Lady and the Prayer to St Michael the Archangel by Pope Leo XIII, "St Michael the Archangel defend us in battle..." The relic of St Michael brought so much reassurance to us, we kept holding the relic and repeating this prayer many times throughout the day, especially when things got really hard.

At one point in the summer it seemed like things came to a complete standstill. We were waiting to be assigned a court appointment in South Korea, but weeks passed by



without any word from our agency. We were growing increasingly anxious, watching the world news every day, knowing the narrow window of opportunity to be able to travel overseas before the Fall (Autumn) was rapidly closing in.

St Michael Novena

We decided to pray a novena to St Michael for the special intention of receiving our court appointment. Exactly on the day we completed the novena, we received notice that our court appointment had been scheduled, and even more miraculously, at exactly the same time we logged in online to see the court notification, we received a text from the lady who

had loaned us the relic. She told us she had been able to secure another relic for herself, and wanted us to keep the relic she had given us – forever! What a miraculous moment for us, and proof of St Michael's powerful intervention on behalf of our family!

Now as we are writing this story, our perfect little boy is playing in the living room. We are so in awe of his sweet little personality and everything that God did to bring us together. God is truly faithful, and St Michael is a powerful intercessor, and we are forever grateful for the way God brought our family together.

In the midst of all the storms, he never stopped looking after us, but more importantly, he never stopped looking after the precious little boy whom he decided to place in our hearts to be his forever family. We cannot wait for the time to come when we can tell him this story and teach him how very precious he is in God's eyes. And what a powerful protector he has in St Michael.

All glory and thanksgiving be to God!

Mirna and Danny
Hilton Head, SC, USA
May, 2021



Sadly on 24th October 2021 Joanna Jabłońska aged 60 years passed away. A good friend to our Michalite Community and for many years an excellent translator for The Angels magazine. She had a great devotion and love to the Divine Mercy and St Michael the Archangel.

Let us keep Joanna in our prayers.

What kind of glasses are you wearing?

An old maxim states, “Where you stand depends on where you sit”, which means that our views and opinions depend on the circumstances in which we live. This is as true of our daily lives as it is of our spiritual lives.

There are people who view all that happens to them in life, as it were, through dark glasses, seeing only the shortcomings of others and the spread of evil at every turn. Such people have a negative effect on others.

There are also those who look through rose-tinted glasses – perceiving only the positive and, therefore, frequently being at one remove from reality. The truth is that there is much evil and many workings of the Devil in the world surrounding us. It is true to say that evil shouts and imposes itself on our notice, while we must learn to notice the good, which is beautiful and humble, but hidden.

The believers wear Divine glasses. They learn to look at life and events from God’s perspective.

People with a close relationship to St Michael the Archangel, obtain, among other graces, the grace of a wise, godly perception, sensitive to evil, being able to unmask it and call it by name. But, above all, this Divine gaze sharpens their spiritual perception of the good around us that touches our lives.

I am pretty sure that St Michael the Archangel makes our gaze, on the one hand more true and realistic, and on

the other, very sensitive both to Divine action and to the workings of evil.

An awareness of the power of God in our lives and in the lives of others we meet, allows us to look with hope to the future. Despite the pandemic, we should become aware once again of the power of God’s action in our lives through the action and intercession of the Prince of the Heavenly Host.

We are not alone: we are continually cared for, defended and protected, and strengthened in the battle against evil by St Michael the Archangel.

What kind of glasses are you wearing? If you wear the dark or rose-tinted glasses and would like to replace them with Divine ones, there is no problem at all. All you need to do is to ask for this grace and start exercising your new perception. St Michael the Archangel will definitely help you.

WHO IS LIKE GOD!

Fr Robert Ryndak CSMA

Moderator of the Fraternity of the Scapular of St Michael the Archangel

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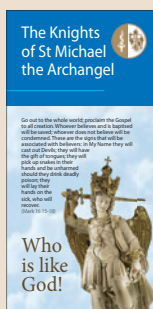
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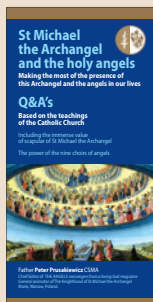
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St Faustina is full of wonder, respect, reverence and admiration for St Michael the Archangel. The fundamental and only reason behind such an attitude is, as she is at pains to stress, the fact that he did the will of God. He is for her the angel resplendent in his wonder and boundless humility towards the Creator. He is the angel who gazes at God with love, who learns the will of God and courageously carries it out.



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GREAT
READ!

Under the protection of St Michael the Archangel

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

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

800 parishes, has been particularly marked out in his mission. By means of his presence in particular places in our country, he stands close to each person and intercedes for them:

grounding them in the faith, making them aware of the good, supports them in prioritising right values in their lives, convinces the doubtful, strengthens the weak, brings unity to married couples and families, extricates souls mired in sin, restoring the purity of their hearts, frees people from captivity. Over 375,000 people, convinced of the effectiveness of heavenly intervention and the constant protection of the archangel, have been invested with the scapular of St Michael. The number of those with a devotion to the archangel, as well as Knights of St Michael the Archangel, is constantly growing.

The book which we now present for your attention answers the need for reliable knowledge about St Michael the Archangel among the

faithful, and also serves as a useful resource for use in preparing homilies and catechesis on the subject.

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



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