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The Angels

Messengers from a loving God

St Michael and Ukraine

Way of the Cross
with refugees

How to practise hope

Artists at the service of God

The open hands
of Sr Clare Crockett

Mystery of faith



■ Statue of St Michael
the Archangel in Kiev,
Ukraine

Trust and hope in God

Many of you pray the holy rosary. At the beginning we start with one Our Father and three Hail Marys along with our intentions. We pray for hope, faith and love. To grow in faith, we need to pray for these three divine virtues: hope, faith and love.

If we want to have more hope we should pray for that intention.

What is hope? There is no life without hope. Often we say, 'I hope for so and so.' We hope that tomorrow will be better than today; so we hope. We hope for each other. I hope you will help me to overcome my problems and find a solution. When we turn to someone who is very helpful and wise we can ask and his answer will meet our thoughts and expectations.

We should have hope. When we go to watch the soccer or football match, we hope our side will win the match.

Even more so, we hope in God. When we say, "Jesus I trust You", this refers not only to faith but also to hope. We trust and we hope in Jesus. We are not hopeless. With God nothing is impossible.

At times we have faith and we believe but we lose our hope: we do not expect that things can change for the better in the future. We should not



give up hope. For God everything is possible.

Maybe you still have faith in God but do not expect anything from Him. Ask and He will listen to your prayer. The sign of hope is our persistence in prayer. We keep asking, we keep searching, we keep knocking and then God will answer our request according to His divine will.

Do not be helpless or hopeless. Follow the example of the saints. Our future is in God's hands, trust in Him. St Faustina will help you for sure.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus we ask you give us more hope. Answer our prayer, you know what we need. Bless us and guide and support us. Strengthen and fill us with your love and power.*

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

God bless you.

Fr **Peter Prusakiewicz** CSMA
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The Angels

Messengers from a loving God

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Pentecost

It is the Christian holiday celebrated on the 50th day (the seventh Sunday) from Easter Sunday. It commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and other followers of Jesus Christ while they were in Jerusalem as described in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:1–31).



The moral life of Christians is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. They belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David. They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations.

The fruits of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory. The tradition of the Church lists twelve of them: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity (CCC 1830-1832).

Come Holy Spirit

Eternal Father, in the name of Jesus Christ and through the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, send to me Your Holy Spirit.

*Come, Holy Spirit, and grant me the gift of Wisdom.
Come, Holy Spirit, and grant me the gift of Understanding.
Come, Holy Spirit, and grant me the gift of Counsel.
Come, Holy Spirit, and grant me the gift of Fortitude.
Come, Holy Spirit, and grant me the gift of Knowledge.
Come, Holy Spirit, and grant me the gift of Piety.
Come, Holy Spirit, and grant me the gift of fear of the Lord.*

Three times say, Glory be to Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Holy Spirit, Eternal Love, fountain of heavenly light, come inflame our hearts.

■ Pentecost by an unknown artist, 1657, now in St Margaret's Church in Planina, Slovenia



Dolina Modlitwy, www.unsplash.com

The Chaplet sets the Philippines free!

The first visit of Pope John Paul II to St Faustina's.

The Chaplet especially became very popular. Here was a form of prayer invoking God's mercy upon the whole world, and extending the Eucharistic offering of Jesus Christ with an intercessory intention:

Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world; for the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world (Diary 476).

In fact, Jesus had attached the most extraordinary promises to the

sincere and devout recitation of this Chaplet. As He said to Sr. Faustina: *Encourage souls to say the Chaplet I have given you. ...Whoever will recite it will receive great mercy at the hour of death. ...Even if there were a sinner most hardened, if he were to recite this Chaplet only once, he would receive grace from My infinite mercy. ...Through the Chaplet you will obtain everything, if what you ask for is compatible with My will (Diary 1541, 687, and 1731).*

In the mid-1980's, for example, the people of the Philippines turned

as a nation to The Divine Mercy through a daily nationwide broadcast of the Three O' Clock Hour of Mercy prayers and the Chaplet. They pleaded with the Lord for a peaceful and just settlement of their national conflict. Almost miraculously, a non-violent revolution did take place, and a democracy was restored to that poor, yet faithful country.

Meanwhile, convincing evidence of a miracle of healing attributed to Sr. Faustina's intercession removed the last obstacle to the recognition of her sanctity by the universal Church.

As a result, on April 18, 1993, on the Sunday after Easter (Mercy Sunday), she was given the title “Blessed” at a Mass at St Peter’s Basilica in Rome. In his homily at that beatification, the Holy Father exclaimed: “Her mission continues and is yielding astonishing fruit. It is truly marvellous how her devotion to the Merciful Jesus is spreading in our contemporary world, and gaining so many human hearts! This is doubtless a sign of the times, a sign of our 20th century. The balance of this century that is now ending ... presents a deep restlessness and fear of the future. Where, if not in the Divine Mercy, can the world find refuge and the light of hope? Believers understand that perfectly.”

On January 23, 1995, the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship granted to the bishops of Poland - the first group of bishops to make the request - the right to celebrate the liturgical Feast of Mercy on the Sunday after Easter, the very day in the liturgical calendar that the Lord had requested of Sr. Faustina. Then on the Sunday after Easter, 1995, the Holy Father himself celebrated “Mercy Sunday” in the city of Rome,

establishing at the same time an international centre for the devotion at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Sassia (just a few hundred yards away from St Peter’s Basilica) and blessed an image of The Divine Mercy for that church.

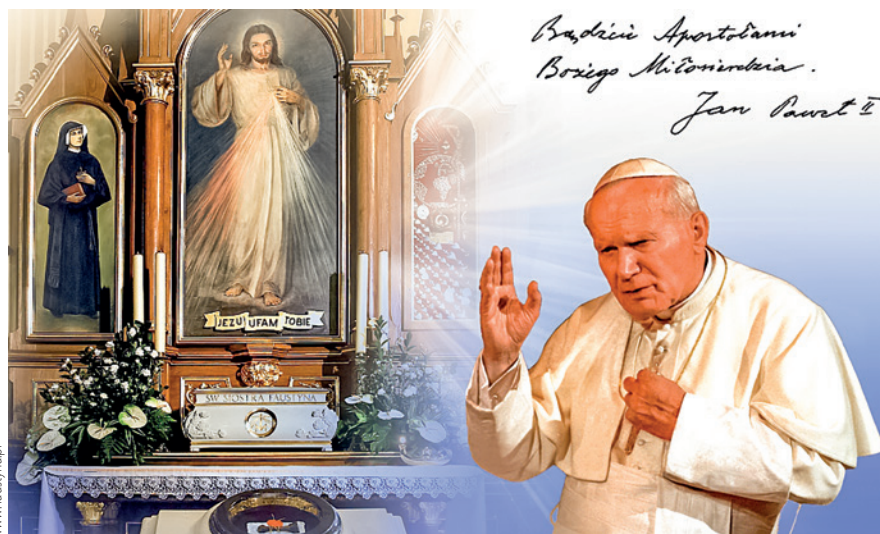
If there remained doubt in anyone’s mind about the general approval of this message and devotion by the See of St Peter, that doubt was removed by the Pope’s visit to the tomb of Bl Faustina near Cracow in the summer of 1997, and by the remarkable address he delivered there at the convent of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. In that address he not only explained the importance of this message and devotion to all souls seeking for God, he also told of how important it has been to him personally, in his own spiritual journey: “There is nothing that man needs more than Divine Mercy - that love which is benevolent, which is compassionate, which raises man above his weakness to the infinite heights of the holiness of God. In this place we become particularly aware of this. From here, in fact, went out the Message of Divine Mercy that

Christ himself chose to pass on to our generation through Blessed Faustina. And it is a *message that is clear and understandable for everyone*. Anyone can come here, look at this image of the merciful Jesus, His Heart radiating grace, and hear in the depths of his own soul what Blessed Faustina heard: ‘*Fear nothing. I am with you always.*’ And if this person responds with a sincere heart: ‘*Jesus, I trust in You,*’ he will find comfort in all his anxieties and fears. ...On the threshold of the third millennium *I come to entrust to Him once more my Petrine ministry - Jesus, I trust in You!*”

The message of Divine Mercy has always been near and dear to me. It is as if history had inscribed it in the tragic experience of the Second World War. In those difficult years it was *a particular support and an inexhaustible source of hope*, not only for the people of Kraków but for the entire nation. This was also my personal experience, which I took with me to the See of Peter and which in a sense forms the image of this Pontificate. I give thanks to divine Providence that I have been enabled to contribute personally to the fulfilment of Christ’s will, through the institution of the Feast of Divine Mercy. Here, near relics of Blessed Faustina Kowalska, I give thanks also for the gift of her beatification. I pray unceasingly that God will have ‘mercy on us and the whole world.’”

Dr. Robert Stackpole

Director of the John Paul II Institute of Divine Mercy, an apostolate of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception. Used with permission of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M.



■ Be the Apostles of the Divine Mercy, Pope John Paul II wrote

Artists at the service of God (part 1)

In getting to know the persons or individuals associated with famous religious paintings we may come to a better understanding of the images.

The Divine Mercy Image

The beginning of the story of the painting of the Divine Mercy Image is outlined in detail in St Faustina's diary (Diary 47-53). She recorded that it was 22nd February, 1931.

She wrote, "In the evening, when I was in my cell, I saw the Lord Jesus clothed in a white garment. One hand [was] raised in the gesture of blessing, the other was touching the garment at the breast. From beneath the garment, slightly drawn aside at the breast, there were emanating two large rays, one red, the other pale. In silence I kept my gaze fixed on the Lord; my soul was struck with awe, but also with great joy. After a while, Jesus said to me, 'Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature: "Jesus, I trust in You"'. I desire that this image be venerated, first in your chapel, and [then] throughout the world.

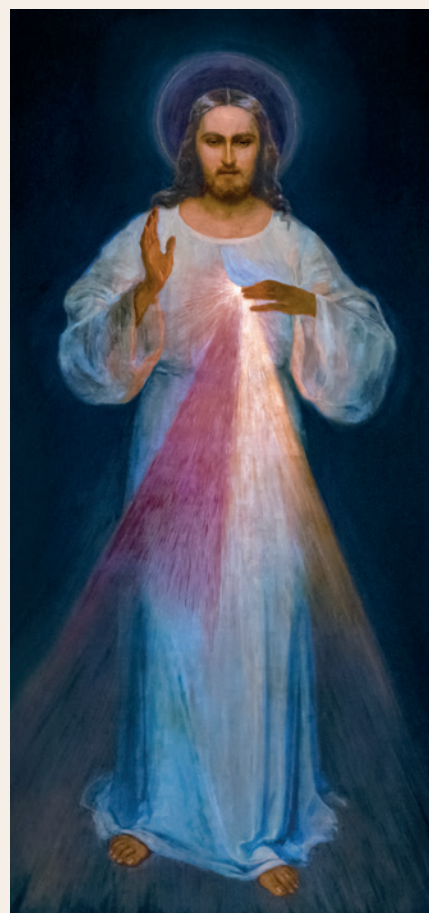
'I promise that the soul that will venerate this image will not perish. I also promise victory over [its] enemies already here on earth, especially at the hour of death. I Myself will defend it as My own glory.'

When I told this to my confessor, I received this for a reply: 'That refers to your soul.' He told me, 'Certainly, paint God's image in your soul.' When I came out of the confessional, I again heard words such as these: 'My image already is in your soul. I desire that there be a Feast of Mercy. I want this image, which you will paint with a brush, to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter; that Sunday is to be the Feast of Mercy.'

'I desire that priests proclaim this great mercy of Mine towards souls of sinners. Let the sinner not be afraid to approach Me. The flames of mercy are burning Me – clamouring to be spent; I want to pour them out upon these souls.'

Jesus complained to me in these words, 'Distrust on the part of souls is tearing at My insides. The distrust of a chosen soul causes Me even greater pain; despite My inexhaustible love for them they do not trust Me. Even My death is not enough for them. Woe to the soul that abuses these [gifts].'

When I spoke about this to Mother Superior [Rose, telling her] that God had asked this of me, she answered that Jesus should give some



■ Divine Mercy Image, the first version by E. Kazimirowski, 1934

sign so that we could recognize Him more clearly.

When I asked the Lord Jesus for a sign as a proof 'that You are truly my God and Lord and that this request comes from You,' I heard this interior voice, 'I will make this all clear to the Superior by means of the graces which I will grant through this image.'

Sr Faustina's reluctance

When I tried to run away from these interior inspirations, God said to me that on the Day of Judgment He would demand of me a great number of souls.

Once, exhausted because of these various difficulties that had befallen me because of what Jesus had said to me and what He had demanded of me for the painting of this image, I made up my mind to approach Father Andrasz before my perpetual vows, and to ask him to dispense me from all these interior inspirations and from the duty of painting this image. After having heard my confession, Father Andrasz gave me this answer: 'I will dispense you from nothing, Sister; it is not right for you to turn away from these interior inspirations, but you must absolutely – and I say, absolutely – speak about them to your confessor; otherwise you will go astray despite the great graces you are receiving from God.

'For the present you are coming to me for confession, but understand, Sister, that you must have a permanent confessor; that is to say, a spiritual director.'

I was very upset by this. I thought that I would get myself free from everything, and it turned out quite the opposite – an explicit command to follow the requests of Jesus. And now, still another torment, as I had no permanent confessor. Even if I went to the same confessor for a certain period of time, I could not open my soul to him in respect to these graces, and this caused me ineffable pain. So I asked Jesus to give these graces to someone else, because I did not

know how to make use of them and was only wasting them. 'Jesus, have mercy on me; do not entrust such great things to me, as You see that I am a bit of dust and completely inept.'

But the goodness of Jesus is infinite; He had promised me visible help here on earth, and a little while later I received it in Vilnius, in the person of Father Sopoćko. I had already known him before coming to Vilnius, thanks to an interior vision. One day I saw him in our chapel between the altar and the confessional and suddenly heard a voice in my soul say, **'This is the visible help for you on earth. He will help you carry out My will on earth.'**

A seemingly impossible task

The task assigned by Jesus to Sr Faustina was humanly impossible because she did not have even basic artistic skills. Trying to obey God's will to paint the picture, she sought help from her fellow sisters, but in vain. On the one hand, urged on by Jesus to perform this task, and on the other, the disbelief of her confessors and superiors, became a great personal suffering for Sister Faustina. During her stay in Płock (over 2 years), and later in Warsaw, she was still thinking about the unfulfilled request of Jesus, all the more so as he made her feel how big the task He gave her was in God's plans:

"I prayed as I do at certain times, without saying a word. Suddenly, I saw the Lord who said to me, **'Know that if you neglect the matter of the painting of the image and the whole work of mercy, you will have to**



■ Eugeniusz Kazimirowski, self portrait

answer for a multitude of souls on the day of judgment' " (Diary 154).

After perpetual vows, Sister Faustina was transferred to a convent house in Vilnius on 27 May, 1933. There she met the help that Jesus had promised - the confessor and spiritual director, Father Michał Sopoćko. He made an attempt to fulfil the demands of the Lord Jesus. In the 'Memories' Fr Sopoćko wrote, "Driven by curiosity about what the picture would be, rather than by faith in the truthfulness of these visions, I asked the painter Professor Eugeniusz Kazimirowski to paint this picture."

Father Sopoćko partially acquainted the painter with the mission of Sister Faustina and obliged him to keep the secret. Professor Kazimirowski was a respected and thoroughly educated painter. He decided to give up his own artistic concept in order to reliably transfer on canvas what Sister Faustina depicted. She and Sister Borgia were coming to the painter's studio for about half a year to make necessary supplements and corrections. Father Sopoćko also

participated in the painting process. That time offered an opportunity to read the content of the painting more thoroughly. The controversial issues were resolved by the Lord Jesus Himself (Diary 299; 326; 327; 344).

Sister Faustina's conversation with Jesus about the painting was very meaningful; "Once, when I was visiting the artist [Eugene Kazimirowski] who was painting the image, and saw that it was not as beautiful as Jesus is, I felt very sad about it, but I hid this deep in my heart. When we had left the artist's house, Mother Superior [Irene] stayed in town to attend to some matters while I returned home alone. I went immediately to the chapel and wept a good deal. I said to the Lord, 'Who will paint You as beautiful as You are?' Then I heard these words: **'Not in the beauty of the colour, nor of the brush lies the greatness of this image, but in My grace'**" (Diary 313).

The conversation shows the sincerity of a person gifted with supernatural grace of seeing the real beauty of the risen Saviour.

The Lord Jesus appeared to Sister Faustina many times in the form that was painted in the picture (Diary 473; 500; 560; 613; 657; 1046; 1047), and he also demanded many times that this image, sanctified with his living presence, be made available for public worship.

Thanks to the efforts of Father Sopoćko, the image of the Merciful Saviour, displayed in the gallery window at the Chapel of Our Lady of Mercy in the Gate of Dawn in Vilnius, was venerated for the first time on 26-28 April, 1935 during the solemn end of the 1900 Jubilee celebrations of the Redemption of the World.

Public veneration of the Image

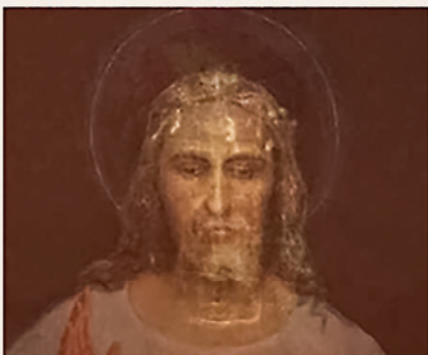
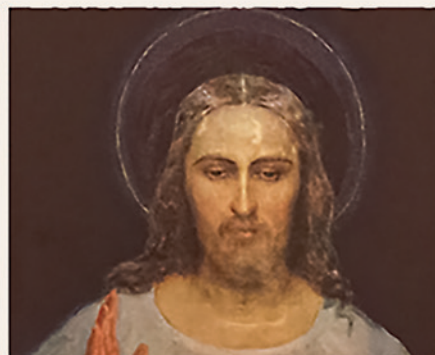
On the last day of the ceremony (it was the first Sunday after Easter), Sister Faustina participated in the service. As Jesus requested, Fr Sopoćko gave a sermon on God's mercy.

"Strangely, all things came about just as the Lord had requested. In fact, it was on the first Sunday after Easter [April, 1935] that the image was publicly honoured by crowds of people for the first time. For three days it was exposed and received public veneration. Since it was placed at the very top of a window at Ostra Brama [Shrine of Our Lady, above the 'Eastern Gate' to the city of Vilnius], it could be seen from a great distance. At Ostra Brama, during these three days, the closing of the Jubilee of the Redemption of the world was being celebrated, marking the nineteen hundred years that have passed since the Passion of our

Saviour. I see now that the work of Redemption is bound up with the work of mercy requested by the Lord" (Diary 89).

"When the image was displayed, I saw a sudden movement of the hand of Jesus, as He made a large sign of the cross. In the evening of the same day, when I had gone to bed, I saw the image going over the town, and the town was covered with what appeared to be a mesh and nets. As Jesus passed, He cut through all the nets and finally made a large sign of the cross and disappeared" (Diary 416).

On Friday, 26 April Sister Faustina attended the ceremony during which the image was displayed. She wrote, "I heard a sermon given by my confessor [Father Sopoćko]. This sermon about Divine Mercy was the first of the things that Jesus had asked for so very long ago. When he began to speak about the great mercy of the Lord, the image came alive and the rays pieced the hearts of the people



■ Part of the Shroud of Turin, animation

gathered there, but not all to the same degree. Some received more, some less. Great joy filled my soul to see the grace of God” (Diary 417).

Regarding the Feast of The Divine Mercy, the conclusion of the Jubilee of Redemption, on Sunday, 28 April 1935, Sr Faustina wrote, “When we went to take part in the celebrations, my heart leapt with joy that the two solemnities were so closely united. I asked God for mercy on the souls of sinners. Toward the end of the service, when the priest took the Blessed Sacrament to bless the people, I saw the Lord Jesus as He is represented in the image. The Lord gave His blessing, and the rays extended over the whole world. Suddenly, I saw an impenetrable brightness in the form of a crystal dwelling place, woven together from waves of brilliance unapproachable to both creatures and spirits. Three doors led to this resplendence. At that moment, Jesus, as He is represented in the image, entered this resplendence through the second door to the Unity within. It is a triple Unity, which is incomprehensible – which is infinity. I heard a voice, **‘This Feast emerged from the very depths of My mercy, and it is confirmed in the vast depths of My tender mercies. Every soul believing and trusting in My mercy will obtain it.’** I was overjoyed at the immense goodness and greatness of my God” (Diary 420).

Consecration of the First Image

Fr Romuald Jałbrzykowski, the Archbishop of Vilnius, after a positive opinion of experts, issued permission



■ The Ostra Brama Shrine in Vilnius, Lithuania

for the first image of Merciful Jesus to be consecrated and placed in the church of St Michael in Vilnius on 4 April, 1937.

From this church, beautifully displayed next to the main altar, the painting was venerated and endowed with numerous votive offerings. It radiated with holiness. The devotion to God’s mercy quickly spread beyond the borders of Vilnius. Regardless of limited possibilities, it reached millions of people around the world.

In a later correspondence, Sister Faustina wrote to Fr. Sopoćko; “God let me know that he is satisfied with what has already been done. Immersed in prayer and in God’s closeness, I experienced a deep peace

in my soul about the whole work of this. And now with regard to these pictures [small copies] (...) People buy a bit and many souls have already experienced God’s grace that flowed through this source. Like everything else, this work also goes slowly. These pictures are not as pretty as this big painting. They are bought by those who are attracted to it by God’s grace” (letter dated 21 Feb, 1938).

Urszula Grzegorzcyk

Consultant: Sr Maria Kalinowska,
Congregation of the Sisters of
Merciful Jesus / www.faustyna.eu

Translation: **Agata Pawłowska**

Way of the Cross with the Refugees

The Stations of the Cross are a 14-step Catholic devotion that commemorates Jesus Christ's last day on Earth as a man. It focuses on specific events of His last day, beginning with His condemnation. The stations are commonly used as a mini pilgrimage as the individual moves from station to station meditating on a specific event from Christ's last day.



■ Prayer cards sent to Ukrainian soldiers

Opening Prayer

ACT OF CONTRITION

O my God, my Redeemer, behold me here at Thy feet. From the bottom of my heart I am sorry for all my sins, because by them I have offended Thee, Who art infinitely good. I will die rather than offend thee again.

1st Station: Jesus is condemned to death

My Son was condemned to death from the very beginning. Herod sentenced him to death when he was a young child. Mary and Joseph had to flee from their own country. The Holy Family knows the fate of a refugee and an emigrant. As Jesus grew up and the time came, his personal apocalypse began by the judgment of Pilate.

Today, my Ukrainian children, both large and small, are also experiencing their apocalypse - their lives, as they had known them, are over. They flee from their homeland with great fear. Will there be a place for them in your taverns, homes and hearts, My children?

2nd Station: Jesus carries His cross

My Son accepts the cross - real toil, actual pain, a large wooden beam. He does not run away. He does not complain, but carries out the task I have set before Him.

My Ukrainian children also undertook the toil of war, the pain of

suffering, wounds and death, and the cross of defence of their homeland.

My children, you also accept the trouble of helping your brothers and sisters in need. I know your effort, anxiety, fear and fears. Despite this, you do not run away, you do not complain, but you undertake the mission of solidarity to help refugees. I know and see your selfless commitment and prayers. I assure you, you will not be left without a reward.



■ Ukrainian volunteers preparing food for soldiers



■ Gifts for refugees

3rd Station: Jesus falls the first time

My Son falls under the weight of the cross.

Many of you also break down, get scared and panic. You cannot eat, sleep, or think clearly. Sometimes you get nervous. You are exhausted. I know your toil, My children. I assure you: I will not leave you orphans.

My Son gets up and goes on.

May you, also, get up. Those of you who are not actively involved - get up from the couch and see how you can help. Those of you who are trapped in worry and fear - stand erect, hold your heads high (Luke 21:28). I am with you until the end of the world.

4th Station: Jesus meets His Mother

My Son exchanged glances with His Mother, Mary, for a short moment. Her presence, only a dozen or so seconds, with her gaze full of love and compassion gave Him strength and reminded Him that He was not alone in the nameless crowd.

Refugees need your presence too, My children. It is not just about material help and prayer. Your smile, a pat on the hand or back, your warm gaze are channels of love that cheer them up in their terror and loss. Be generous with a smile and a tender touch. I assure you that I will remember every little gesture of kindness on your part.

5th Station: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross

Simon was returning from the field after hard work. He didn't want to get involved in anything. All he wanted was peace and rest in his own home. However, the soldiers forced him to carry the cross with My Son. This situation completely surprised him.

The refugees were also surprised by the outbreak of the war. They did not want to leave their homes and work, in fear, to flee to other countries with great uncertainty in their hearts.

My children, I know that you were surprised by the influx of refugees. I know you work hard every day and

some of you would prefer not to make another effort. I know some of you help reluctantly and out of a sense of duty, like Simon. Know that I will not forget you, and your reward will be great in heaven, for you have given a cup of fresh water to drink to those in need (Mt 10:42).

6th Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Veronica wiped blood, sweat and tears from my Son's face.

The Ukrainian people have blood, sweat and tears on their faces today.

You, My beloved women, are like Veronica. You rush not only with towels, but also blankets, clothes and meals. I am very proud of you. You can generously feed the needy with a tasty dinner, with a kind word, with a gentle gesture. You can take care of the needs of refugees, you have it in your blood.

In refugees, my Son comes hungry and thirsty and you give Him food and drink. In refugees, my Son comes naked and sick and you give



■ Mayor of Przemyśl Wojciech Bakun (on the left) with volunteers

Him clothes and medicines (Mt 25: 35-36). I will not forget your kindness and hospitality towards My Ukrainian children.

7th Station: Jesus falls the second time

My Son falls for the second time under the weight of the cross.

Look at the refugees, My children. Some are shocked and grieve over their broken homeland. Others experience despair and depression due to loss of their relatives and separation of families. These brothers and sisters of yours bear the trauma of war and homelessness. Their lives fell apart. Their souls weep and their hearts are torn by a silent cry of pain. This is not seen in the media. But I know their hearts.

My children, console and comfort the Ukrainian people (Is 40: 1). With your support, prayer and friendship, help them lift themselves out of fear and despair.



■ Burgers for refugees, Przemyśl railway station

8th Station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

My Son accepts the tears of women and He does not despise their compassion.

My children, do not be ashamed of your tears. They are a sign of your humanity and love for your suffering Ukrainian brothers and sisters. May you be cold or hot, never lukewarm! (Rev 3: 15-16).

Pope Francis understands these things well and says this: "Some people think that showing compassion, helping, and serving is something for losers. It is an opportune day to shake hands, to tell the communities and societies in which we live that the time has come for brotherhood. All together; because the fundamental issue is solidarity with one another. That is why I repeat today, there is no time to be indifferent: either we will be brothers or everything will collapse" (4th Feb, 2022 on the International Day of Human Fraternity).

9th Station: Jesus falls a third time

My Son does not seem to rise again. But it's not over yet.

It seems that the Ukrainian people will not recover anymore. But it's not over yet.

You, dear children, will help them to rise. Offer your prayer, fasting, good deeds. Do whatever is necessary to help them rebuild themselves spiritually, emotionally, and materially. "If you have resident aliens in your country, you will not molest them. You will treat resident aliens as though they were native-born and love them as yourself - for



■ Gifts for refugees in Przemyśl from Mary and Brendan Pierce, Co. Kilkenny, Ireland

you yourselves were once aliens in Egypt. I am Yahweh your God" (Leviticus 19: 33-34).

10th Station: Jesus's clothes are taken away

My Son was deprived of literally everything. There were even attempts to deprive Him of his dignity by stripping Him of His garments and exposing His nakedness to the public.

My children, it will not be like this between you. Your Ukrainian brothers and sisters have also been brutally deprived of everything: their homeland, homes, relatives, work, their daily lives. Your help and prayer will allow them to keep their dignity and faith in the good of others. Thanks to you, they know that they are not alone on the way of the cross for their nation.

11th Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

My Son's body hangs on the cross. He is bleeding; he is in a lot of pain. This is another day of the torment of the Ukrainian people. They are bleeding. They are in a lot of pain.

This nation belongs to the Mystical Body of my Son. You, too, countries of Europe and other continents, also. Therefore, you cannot say that this is not your war.

“For as with the human body which is a unity although it has many parts - all the parts of the body, though many, still making up one single body - so it is with Christ... And indeed the body consists not of one member but of many... the members are many, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ and nor can the head say to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ What is more, it is precisely the parts of the body that seem to be the weakest which are the indispensable ones. It is the parts of the body which we consider least dignified that we surround with the greatest dignity... If one part is hurt, all the parts share its pain.”(cf. 1 Cor 12: 12-26).

12th Station: Jesus dies on the cross

My Son takes his last breath and puts His Spirit into My hands.

I am the one who strengthens the spirit of the Ukrainian people whenever they ask Me for it.

It is I who strengthen your spirit to serve your suffering brothers and sisters. “To your hands I commit my spirit, by you have I been redeemed. Take pity on me, Yahweh, for I am in trouble. Vexation is gnawing away my eyes, my soul deep within me. For my life is worn out with sorrow, and my years with sighs. My strength gives way under my misery, and my bones are all wasted away. But my trust is in you, Yahweh; I say, ‘You are my God,’ every moment of my life is in your hands, rescue me from the clutches of my foes who pursue me.” (Ps 31)

13th Station: The body of Jesus is taken down from the cross

My Son’s body falls from the cross into the hands of His Mother, who tenderly and delicately touches His wounds.

My children, be the hands of Mary for your Ukrainian brothers

and sisters. Pope Francis explains: “Looking at Mary with her Son in her arms, I think of young mothers and their children fleeing wars and famine, or waiting in refugee camps. They are many! What can be more painful for a mother than to see her child suffering poverty? It is troubling indeed. We would not blame Mary, were she to complain of those unexpected troubles. Yet she does not lose heart. She does not complain, but keeps silent. Rather than complain, she chooses a different part: For her part, the Gospel tells us, Mary “kept all these things, pondering them in her heart” (cf. Lk 2:19). The Gospel speaks of Mary “bringing together”, comparing, her different experiences and finding the hidden threads that connect them. In her heart, in her prayer, she does exactly that: she binds together the beautiful things and the unpleasant things. She does not keep them apart, but brings them together. And in this way she discerns their greater meaning, from God’s perspective” (Holy Mass and the Angelus on 1st January, 2022).

14th Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb

My Son’s body was laid in a tomb and a heavy stone was pushed back to seal it. In the silence and darkness of the cave, he awaits the Resurrection. All evil will pass away.

In silence and selfless work, you await the spring of the Resurrection, too. Even though things are bad now, don’t be afraid, I am with you until the end of the world. Remember, My children: the good always heals; the evil always hurts.



■ Carmelite Sisters, refugees from Charkov with our colleague

Agata Pawłowska, Poland

Ukraine Mercy in Action



More than 12 million people are already thought to have fled their homes in Ukraine because of the invasion, according to the United Nations. As well as the 6 million who have left for neighbouring countries including Poland, another 6.5 million people are thought to be displaced inside the war-torn country itself since 24th February 2022.

Weapons: the rosary, scapulars and medals

So many people responded to our request for help. Thousands of St Michael scapulars, St Michael rosary beads and medals have been sent to different parts of Ukraine by van with our priest from our Congregation of St Michael the Archangel, who is Chaplain to the Ukraine army working on the front line in Kiev. Many Ukraine soldiers between the ages of 18 and 60 years old are praying to Our Lady and St Michael for help and protection; some are dying holding the medal of St Michael and holy cards.

Our Congregation is buying medicines, food, water etc. and are in touch with our people in the Ukraine daily to help and assist them in the most difficult of situations.



■ Our office is full with devotionals from around the world



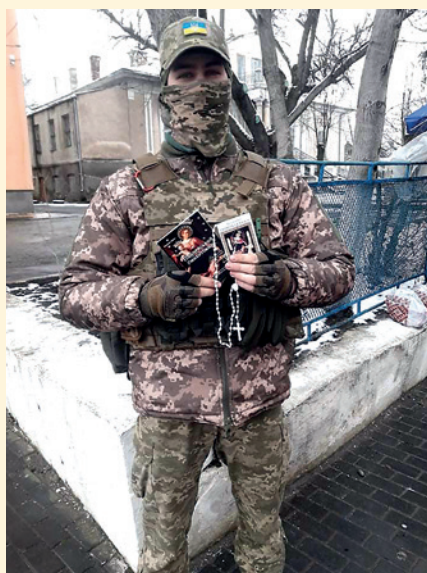
■ Ukrainian soldiers with rosaries, medals and a picture of St Michael



■ Fr Peter is blessing all the gifts



■ The car with St Michael's emblem ready to go to Ukraine



■ A soldier with spiritual weapons



■ Ukrainian volunteers receiving the gifts



■ Letters from readers and benefactors



■ Ukrainian nurses praying for their patients



■ Ukrainian flags with Our Lady and St Michael



■ The Michaelite Sisters, Miejsce Piastowe, Poland



■ The Carmelite Sisters of Charkov receiving help, Przemyśl, Poland

We are using our parishes, three orphanages, schools and several houses to take in refugee mothers and children. On the 4th March, 2022 our orphanage in Krakow, Poland, received 40 orphans with more to follow. We will give the girls and boys a good education and take care of them until they are 18 years of age. Prayers or financial help will be gratefully appreciated, and all cheques should be made payable to Piotr Prusakiewicz and posted to me at the address below, or alternatively email me for my bank details.

For those who may prefer to donate goods directly to our Michaelite Sisters the Mother House is based in Miejsce Piastowe near the Ukraine boarder. We will share items with

our other orphanages in Krakow and Wielopole Skrzyńskie and the Carmelite nuns.

There is a different need now as spring is here and summer is approaching. The boys' and girls' age range is between 2 and 12 years.

For hygienic and practical purposes we kindly ask to please send a donation only so we can buy new necessary items. Michaelite Sister CSSMA Sister Agata Krupa and Fr Prusakiewicz CSMA can organise the purchase of new bedding and clothes for the orphans and refugees.

Piotr Prusakiewicz Bank Name:
BANK PEKAO SA / Bank Address:
ul. Grzybowska 33/57
00-950 Warszawa (Warsaw), Poland

Sterling (GBP) Account:

PL 81 1240 1040 1789 0010 0172 9341
SWIFT: PKOPPLPW

Euro Account:

PL 06 1240 1024 1978 0010 3772 9700
SWIFT: PKOPPLPW

USD Dollar Account:

PL 44 1240 1024 1787 0010 3772 9351
SWIFT: PKOPPLPW

Thank you in advance for your good hearts. My CSMA brothers and the Michaelite Sisters will keep you in prayer, and on behalf of the orphans we appreciate everything.

God bless you

Father **Peter**



■ Children under the care of the Michaelite Sisters, Przemyśl, Poland



St Michael, a patron saint of Ukraine

The Prince of Heavenly Hosts is connected with Ukraine since the dawn of its history.

The *Tale of Bygone Years* often known in English as the *Russian Primary Chronicle* is an old East Slavic chronicle written probably by a Kiev monk, called Nestor, around 1113AD.

The chronicle is considered to be a fundamental source in the interpretation of the history of the East Slavs. The historical period of the text begins with biblical times, in the introduction, and ends in the year 1110AD.

The work's name comes from the opening sentence of the text: "These are the narratives of bygone years regarding the origin of the land of Rus', the first princes of Kiev, and from what source the land of Rus' had its beginning."

Through the use of the document the strong bonds between St Michael and today's Ukraine can be shown.

Vladimir I the Great was Prince of Novgorod, Grand Prince of Kiev, and ruler of Kievan Rus' from 980 to 1015AD. In 988 he introduced Christianity into his land.

The Church, brought to Kievan Rus' from Constantinople, immediately became an integral part of

the state organization, fighting consciously for the victory of the new faith on the vast areas of the state. In the 11th century a construction of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra began and has since become the preeminent centre of Eastern Orthodox Christianity in Europe.

When, in the 12th century, Kievan Rus' transformed into a confederation of independent principalities, it was the Orthodox Church that nurtured the idea of state unity. The Kiev-Pechersky Lavra was of particular importance in maintaining the unity.

In 1093 the supreme ruler of Kievan Rus became Sviatopolk II, the son of Kiev prince Iziaslav Iaroslavich and a Polish princess named Gertrude.

Gertrude had her own prayer book (now the historical document called the Gertrude Psalter) containing a prayer to St Michael the Archangel. She had a great impact on the religious education of her son Sviatopolk. Right after her death in 1108 he started building the St Michael monastery in Kiev. Later



■ Fragments of The Tale of Bygone Years

it was called St Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery. Since December 2018 it has been the centre the Orthodox Church of Ukraine.

Sviatopolk II accepted St Michael the Archangel as his own patron saint as well as the patron saint of war victories, especially over pagan Polovtsians that he fought against several times.

The patronage of St Michael became even clearer during the reign of Sviatopolk's successor, Vladimir Monomakh (1113-1125). St Michael was shown on his seals and coins.

It was during the reign of Prince Vladimir Monomakh that the inhabitants of Kiev most likely officially chose St Michael as a patron-defender, although many voices called for St Gabriel the Archangel.

Like his predecessor Vladimir Monomakh was an outstanding ruler, and his rule was the golden age of Kiev.

Unfortunately, in the middle of the 13th century the Mongols, much more dangerous than the Polovtsians, invaded the lands. They conquered both the Kievan Rus federation and the Polovtsians and appropriated the territories into their state. In fact, it was the end of Kievan Rus, which, after centuries of historical turmoil, was to regain its identity in 1919 as a republic within the Soviet empire, and sovereign independence as a free Ukraine only in 1991.

In 2013 the so-called Euromaidan, a social movement in Ukraine, the largest since 1991, joined waves of protests against their president Viktor Yanukovich. First the Ukrainians protested against electoral fraud, in what is known as the Orange Revolution, and the second time via the Euromaidan against Yanukovich's failure to sign an association agreement with the European Union. This time the protests began 21st November (the day of St Michael the Archangel in the Eastern Rite calendar).

On St Andrew's Night, November 30, students organised a peaceful, spontaneous protest, but at 4 a.m., they were surrounded by the Berkut Special Forces, who beat everyone - boys, girls, pregnant women, random



■ St Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery



■ Kiev Pechersk Lavra a plan of monastery complex

passers-by and media representatives. The victims found shelter right under the wings of St Michael as the monks from St Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery hid them behind their walls.

The brutal attempt to suppress the protests led to the nationwide movement. Demonstrations were organised across the country. Kiev's

central square, Independence Square, became a site of constant protests.

Euromaidan, apart from its political goals, was also, and perhaps most of all, a great spiritual and religious outburst of a daily prayer. This custom was initiated by a charismatic blind priest, Cardinal Lubomyr Huzar, who in December 2013 gave a homily-appeal, calling on all Ukrainians

to purify and be reborn in faith. He then recalled a well-known maxim: "Work as if everything depended on you, pray to God as if everything depended on Him."

Spiritual guides on the Independence Square were Greek Catholics. They also played a huge role in creating the Euromaidan infrastructure for they opened the gates of the Resurrection Cathedral on the left bank of the Dnieper River.

In February 2014, a time of regular bloody clashes, one of the field hospitals was organised at the property of the St Michael Monastery.

The religious dimension of the Euromaidan had several layers. The first was symbolic: protesters wore rosaries pinned to their uniforms. The figure of St Michael, the patron saint of Kievan Rus and defender of Kiev,

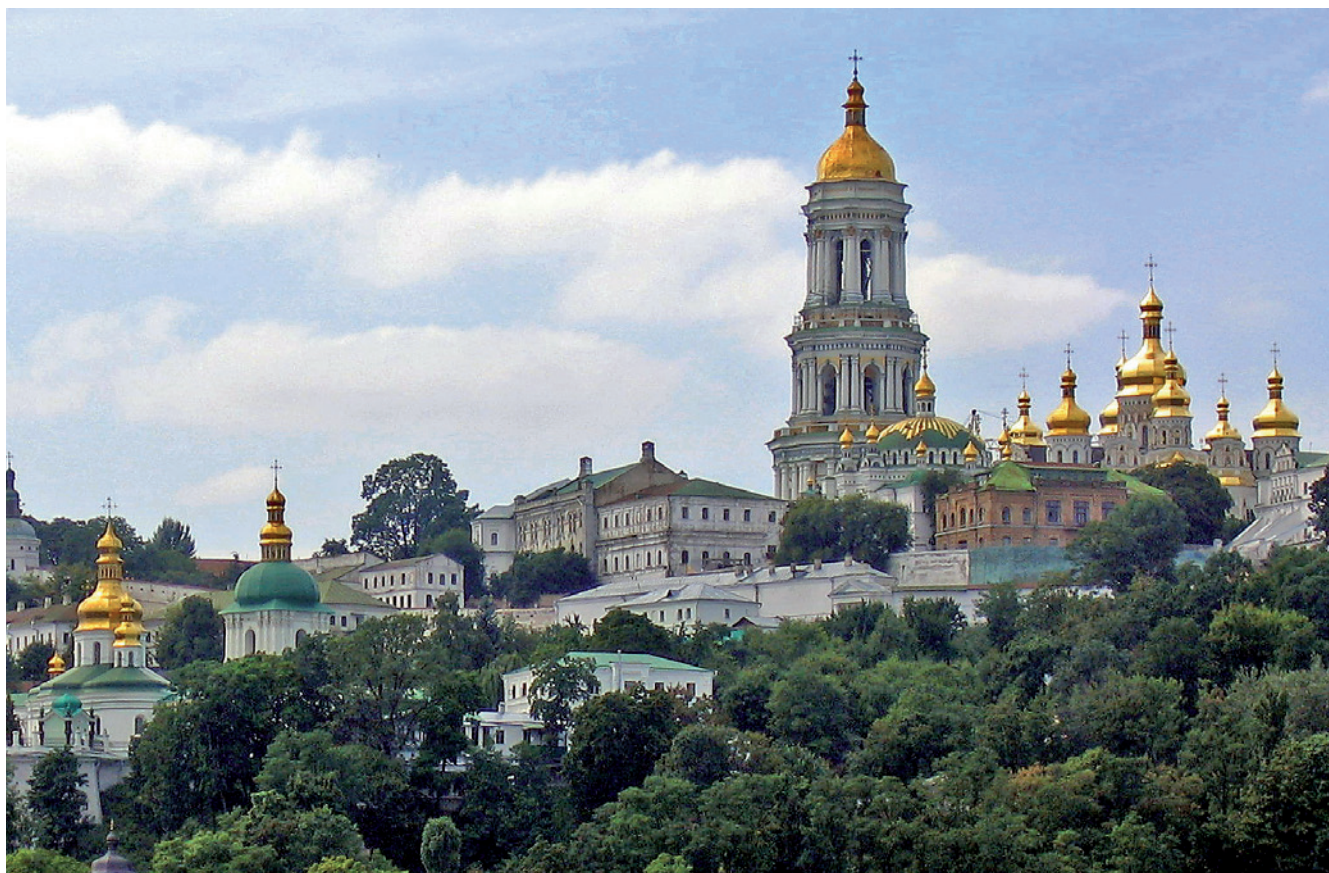
was shown on the banners of the self-defence forces, on the shields and the badges of various security services. Several thousand pictures with the image of St Michael the Archangel and the prayer "St Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle..." were distributed among people. The images of Merciful Jesus and St Nicholas could be also seen in the crowds.

The second religious dimension of Euromaidan was the liturgy. Three tents-chapels were constantly open. In the largest tent the Eastern liturgy services were led regularly by Greek Catholic and Orthodox priests. Euromaidan was also visited by Catholic clergy - Franciscans, Dominicans and diocesan priests. The spiritual dimension of the protests was visible at every step in the centre of Kiev. Every day at 6.00 p.m.

a prayer from the main stage of the Independence Square began. At first the leaders were surprised because they did not expect any religious elements but the spontaneous development of events put them ahead of the fait accompli. So they accepted it quickly. At any time of the day, you could meet people praying in the tent: the priests were constantly on duty there.

Finally, the president Yanukovich left Kiev and the Ukrainian Parliament removed him from office. Oleksandr Turczynov was appointed an acting president. The victory of the Euromaidan sparked separatist tendencies in parts of the country inhabited mostly by Russians. This led to the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the wars in the Donbas.

Herbert Oleschko



■ Kyiv Pechersk Lavra

Sr Clare and the open hands of the Lord (part 2)

Hit by a divine bolt of lightning and connected to the people of the 21st century.

Sr Clare was born on 14th November 1982, in Derry, Northern Ireland. She entered the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother on 11th August 2001, at the age of 18. She took her first vows on 18th February 2006, taking the religious name of Sr Clare Maria of the Trinity and the Heart of Mary. She took her perpetual vows on 8th September 2010. From the moment of her first vows, she served in the Servant Sisters' communities in Belmonte, Cuenca (Spain), Jacksonville, Florida (USA), Valencia (Spain), Guayaquil (Ecuador), and Playa Prieta, Manabí (Ecuador). She passed away during the earthquake in Playa Prieta on 16th April 2016, aged 33.

Having examined in the previous issue a theory of holiness based on the suffering and open hands of the Crucified One, I want in this article to scrutinise whether the holiness of those open and suffering hands is reflected in the life of Sr Clare Crockett.

To begin such an assessment, let us set off by turning to the moment in Sr Clare's life when she bent down to kiss the cross. It was only then that the disparity between the Lord's wounds and Clare Crockett's hands impressed itself deeply upon her consciousness.

The gap was indeed glaring. This was the moment when someone who had been blaggarded into going to

Spain, and who had spent her time smoking and sunbathing impervious to the spiritual significance all around her, this most unlikely of girls, who could not stay still and seemed to have words always coming out of her mouth, was hit by a divine bolt of lightning. The wounded and empty hands had given everything to her and posed to her their own challenge.

What was she to do with her own hands so full of excitement and ambition for celebrity? The force of that question would not remain static, it would only grow and gather momentum over the rest of her life.

Speaking to the young and whole People of God

On one occasion, when Sister Clare was teaching one of her many classes, she suggested that her pupils just weren't "getting her". When she spoke like this, there was more to it than a throwaway line. She indicated that they just were not penetrating into what her life and teaching meant. They were missing the point somehow, getting caught in the superficialities and not seeing the big picture.

In posing this challenge to her pupils in that one moment, she was speaking to a wider audience.

She was speaking to the wider audience of the young people of the 21st century, the people of her own city and country, and to the whole People of God. She was warning this wider audience not to miss out on the deeper language of her life. She was telling us that there was more to her story than simply a young woman becoming a nun, at a time when the women of her generation hardly know what a nun is. There's more to the story than simply a young woman going off on a mission to far flung places and, what is more, the story does not end in the tragedy of an earthquake.

What is being said is that in this young vibrant life, God himself had inscribed in his own handwriting, a message about his holiness that was written to young people, young people who live exactly as Clare Crockett did before she met the Cross, young people who have surrendered to chronic doubt and who know nothing as definite but ego and desire.

An ordinary teenager

The language of God begins in Sr Clare's young life. A few years ago her



■ Sr Clare Crocket in Ecuador

younger sister, Shauna, gave a testimony, and in the testimony, Shauna emphasised the point that her sister, Clare, was just an ordinary teenager.

I believe that testimony to be tremendously significant. Clare lived the same life as so many of her contemporaries and this is why her witness is so important. She knows them, she has seen that life from inside, and has shared their trials of life.

Clare had lived a life full of smoking, drinking, partying, messing around and high jinks, and fascinated by the cult of celebrity. This lifestyle was all she knew up until the moment that the cross made an impact. The lifestyle filled her ears, it filled her eyes, it filled her mouth and it filled her soul. It is a lifestyle that, sadly for some people, will be all they will ever know. And it is not just this present generation that she can speak to, older ones than hers have fallen into the same cul-de-sac.

Experience of the cross

She tells them that she thought she was happy. It was only after the cross that she knew that there was any other option. In addition to the experience of

the cross, there was that infamous moment when, after a hard night drinking that left her bent over a toilet bowl, throwing up her guts, that she was filled with the sense that the One who had hung upon the cross was looking at her again, profoundly disturbed and distressed by what she was doing to herself. Sitting there being sick, she had to question what sort of happiness terminates in this destination? And if she wasn't happy then how many more were there in exactly the same position, young people, middle-aged people and older people, who did not know their own dignity, valued nothing of their own integrity, and knew not what life was about. She realised in that lavatory an age-old wisdom: that we resemble the things that we love. When we love great things then we ourselves become great, but if we love trifling things then they will make us as trifling as themselves. At that toilet bowl, she realised how small her life had become and yet, somehow, she still thought that she was happy. This lifestyle was strangling the very happiness out of her. How many young people and even not so young people labour under the same misapprehension? How many could Sr Clare speak to?

God would be her everything

As she woke from her mistakes, she decided because of the cross to become a servant sister, and so leave father, mother, sisters, family, city, country and language. It wasn't as if these things no longer mattered or that they had lost their value but there was something else, someone else to take their place. God would become her father, her mother, her brother, her sister, her city, her country and her language. God would be to her everything. With such generosity, she could truly speak of herself as a spouse of the crucified Christ. Everything was crucified to her as she started to open her own hands in service.

She did not satisfy herself with becoming a religious sister, she had more gifts to give, she responded to his love as she told herself in the film by trying to give God everyday her one hundred percent, then the next day a little more, and the following a little more again. The cynics amongst us will scoff but, we have only to look at her movie and the book about her life and see that this was not just empty words. Take a good look at the children in the Assumption Catholic School in Jacksonville, Florida, that she taught for their first communion. See the reverence that was exuding from those children and the way that they were concentrated on the Mass, and you have got to realise that that could only have occurred by Clare giving her one hundred percent to that class.

I was a pastor for many years in a parish, and I know just how difficult it is to enthuse children about their faith and to keep them concentrated

on the proper object of their first communion. I must confess that I failed utterly at getting the children at the parochial school to concentrate on Him rather than on the money they received or the various forms of apparel that they were about to wear. I would have given my eye teeth to have a nun who gave her one hundred percent to get children to concentrate and to know who it is that comes to them on their first communion day.

Sr Clare's apostolate in the hospital

In one of her films, we see the A.I.D.S. patient, Paco, who was dying in the hospital where Sr Clare was a chaplain. Paco had, for two decades, been completely cut off from the life of the Church, so one can only imagine the anger and resentment that Sister Clare had to face the first time that she entered his room, and then every time afterwards that she spoke to him of the

things of faith. Only God knows the mortifications and pains that it cost her, in order to encourage him and delicately lead him back to the Church and to Christ in the sacraments.

But because she did it with one hundred percent that patient received his Viaticum, that is his bread for the journey to heaven, and died a son of the Church.

Giving 100% for the Lord

Then there was that underachieving class that was thrust upon her when she went to teach in a school in Ecuador. The class was at the bottom of the heap and was deeply unenthusiased about their studies. But by sheer effort, tenacity, and by her sheer love for them, she drew out of that failing class what was best in them and at the end of the year all the children passed their exams. Right there the one hundred percent is again written large in hard graft and effort.

School of the Lord sufferings

I am a friar of the Discalced Carmelite Order and we have had the privilege in our order of having many members recognised as saints. A seemingly consistent characteristic of those saints' lives was that towards the end of their earthly pilgrimage they were invited to experience in their own bodies the very sufferings that the Lord went through on the cross; some have called it the school of the Lord sufferings. St Therese of Lisieux, St Elizabeth of



the Trinity and St Teresa of the Andes all experienced this type of suffering. The suffering is a harbinger of a final transformation in holiness. We start to see hallmarks of the same process towards the end of Sister Clare's life. As you watch the film, it becomes increasingly more apparent that since arriving in Ecuador she is losing weight, her face is pallid, and her eyes are strained. Even the sisters, when speaking of her, start to mention her migraines and about her having to take more rest. On one occasion, I found out from her mother that after Sr Clare died, during her autopsy, they found that she had been bleeding from her brain. This had never been diagnosed during her life, and one can only imagine the pain that she was enduring the whole time.

"I have written a blank cheque for Him"

One of the most beautiful moments of the whole Sr Clare story, was that night when, marked by suffering and having just arrived home from the treatment room, Sr Clare was greeted by the children in her school who begged her to play her guitar and sing for them. Her religious superior advised her to go on to bed and take the opportunity for some rest. It would have been expected after a long day in the hospital that she would have beat a hasty retreat, but she refused to take the stairs to bed, and she found the wonderful words, "I have written a blank cheque for Him." Again, she responds with her one hundred percent and even a lot more here in the midst of sickness and pain. And so, she went into the room with all the children and sang for them. She said of the moment that even

if she couldn't sing, she could shout as best as she could for her children but even more for her Lord. He alone saw her sacrifice and must have been gladdened by her complete generosity. She had arrived at empty hands.

I hope that by this stage we have all come to realise the sad ending of Sister Clare's earthly life. In the midst of a terrible earthquake that reduced the convent and school to dust and rubble, she died surrounded by five children whom she had been teaching to play the guitar. She died with them enfolded in her arms, trying desperately to protect them from the force of the falling masonry. Even in death, Sr Clare was significantly joined to her Crucified Lord. She had once remarked that it would be a beautiful thing to die at the same age as the Lord. And so it was: Sr Clare died at the untimely, but joined up, age of thirty-three. A sign to us all of the intricate relationship that had been established between Clare Crockett and Jesus Christ; their lives had become so wedded.

Christ's crucified love

Even the power of that horrendous earthquake could not silence Sr Clare. It could not blank out the language that God had written into her life. The power of that union goes on speaking. It is almost as if she goes on singing to us, to young people, to the people of Derry and to the whole Church: the message of Christ's crucified love. He tells us himself, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me;

and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if anyone serves me, the Father will honour him" (Jn 12:25). Sister Clare, as a bride of Christ, stood firmly and squarely at the foot of the cross, she did not move, and, what is more important, she stood there with open hands.

The open hands of Sr Clare

I know that I might seem a little biased but, let me tell you a story from the life of Saint Therese of Lisieux. As Therese lay dying from tuberculosis, she heard outside her window, one of the other sisters in her community speak to another, and that sister was conjecturing about what the mother prioress would write into the obituary of Sr Therese, when she died. The sister observed the prioress would be hard put upon to find anything to write for Therese had done "nothing" in her whole life. That too-talkative a sister lived for nine years with a person who became blessed, a person who was canonised, a person who was declared a patroness of the missions, and then later a Doctor of the Church.

There is none so blind as those who choose not to see. There will be many who will deride and mock the idea of an "ordinary" young woman from the Brandywell being canonised, but they can simply join a long queue that stretches from Nazareth, through Lisieux, and to this very day in Derry, Northern Ireland. The open hands of Sr Clare Crockett speak louder than their grumbling.

Fr Stephen Quinn O.C.D.
Carmelite Fathers, Iona Retreat Centre,
Derry, Northern Ireland. UK.

How to practise hope

(part 1)

In the arduous times of a pandemic we experience various losses. Some of us lose health or loved ones; some lose work or their life savings. We all have lost the way of life that we used to lead before. Lots of us lose hope. How can we regain it and keep it on a daily basis?

Here are some tips suggested by Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Spe Salvi*.

Prayer as a school of hope

A first essential setting for learning hope is prayer. "When no one listens to me any more, God still listens to me. When I can no longer talk to anyone or call upon anyone, I can always talk to God. When there is no longer anyone to help me deal with a need or expectation that goes beyond the human capacity for hope, he can help me. When I have been plunged

into complete solitude ...; if I pray I am never totally alone."

The late Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan, a prisoner for thirteen years, nine of them spent in solitary confinement, has left us a precious little book: *Prayers of Hope*. During thirteen years in jail, in a situation of seemingly utter hopelessness, the fact that he could listen and speak to

God became for him an increasing power of hope, which enabled him, after his release, to become for people all over the world a witness to hope - to that great hope which does not wane even in the nights of solitude.



Danka Perkinson, www.unsplash.com

Honey instead of vinegar

Saint Augustine, in a homily on the *First Letter of John*, describes very beautifully the intimate relationship between prayer and hope. He defines prayer as an exercise of desire. Man was created for greatness - for God himself; he was created to be filled by God. But his heart is too small for the greatness to which it is destined. It must be stretched. "By delaying [his gift], God strengthens our desire; through desire he enlarges our soul and by expanding it he increases its capacity [for receiving him]". Augustine refers to Saint Paul, who speaks of himself as straining forward to the things that are to come (cf. Phil 3:13).

He then uses a very beautiful image to describe this process of enlargement and preparation of the human heart. "Suppose that God wishes to fill you with honey [a symbol of God's tenderness and goodness]; but if you are full of vinegar, where will you put the honey?" The vessel, that is your heart, must first be enlarged and then cleansed, freed from the vinegar and its taste. This requires hard work and is painful, but in this way alone do we become suited to that for which we are destined. Even if Augustine speaks directly only of our capacity for God, it is nevertheless clear that through this effort by which we are freed from vinegar and the taste of vinegar, not only are we made free for God, but we also become open to others. It is only by becoming children of God, that we can be with our common Father.

Inner purification

To pray is not to step outside history and withdraw to our own private corner of happiness. When we pray properly we undergo a process of inner purification which opens us up to God and thus to our fellow human beings as well. In prayer we must learn what we can truly ask of God - what is worthy of God. We must learn that we cannot pray against others. We must learn that we cannot ask for the superficial and comfortable things that we desire at this moment - that meagre, misplaced hope that leads us away from God. We must learn to purify our desires and our hopes. We must free ourselves from the hidden lies with which we deceive ourselves. God sees through them, and when we come before God, we too are forced to recognize them. "But who can discern his errors? Clear me from hidden faults" prays the Psalmist (Ps 19:12).

Failure to recognize my guilt, the illusion of my innocence, does not justify me and does not save me, because I am culpable for the numbness of my conscience and my incapacity to recognize the evil in me for what it is. If God does not exist, perhaps I have to seek refuge in these lies, because there is no one who can forgive me; no one who is the true criterion. Yet my encounter with God awakens my conscience in such a way that it no longer aims at self-justification, and is no longer a mere reflection of me and those of my contemporaries who shape my thinking, but it becomes a capacity for listening to the Good itself.

Private and personal prayer

For prayer to develop this power of purification, it must on the one hand be something very personal, an encounter between my intimate self and God, the living God. On the other hand it must be constantly guided and enlightened by the great prayers of the Church and of the saints, by liturgical prayer, in which the Lord teaches us again and again how to pray properly. Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan, in his book of spiritual exercises, tells us that during his life there were long periods when he was unable to pray and that he would hold fast to the texts of the Church's prayer: the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the prayers of the liturgy. Praying must always involve this intermingling of public and personal prayer. This is how we can speak to God and how God speaks to us. In this way we undergo those purifications by which we become open to God and are prepared for the service of our fellow human beings. We become capable of the great hope, and thus we become ministers of hope for others.

Hope in a Christian sense is always hope for others as well. It is an active hope, in which we struggle to prevent things moving towards the "perverse end". It is an active hope also in the sense that we keep the world open to God. Only in this way does it continue to be a truly human hope.

Pope Benedict XVI
Spe Salvi (32-34)



Quinten de Graaf, www.unsplash.com

Pure eyes of the heart

The Holy Spirit gives a person a very particular way of looking. We cannot look at God “according to the body”, but can discern Him in the Holy Spirit and recognise Him in events, faces, in all which reveals His likeness – thanks to the inner image of God we carry in our hearts.

Seeing is one of the most essential abilities which a person uses from his or her earliest childhood. Our sense of sight (just like all our other senses) may seem to us one of the obvious tools which we utilise in an intuitive manner, which is why we seldom ask ourselves how it should properly be used in the service of our spiritual development.

Purifying our gaze

Our eyes are often tired after many hours working at our computers, looking at the small screens on our telephones, at ever-present adverts, photographs and so on. All these appear before our eyes and feed our inner selves. Christ warns his disciples: “Watch yourselves, or your

hearts will be coarsened by debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life” (Luke 21:34). Our hearts become heavy when we do not give our senses a break and allow access to all available images and words and do not filter them according to whether they conform to evangelical truths.

At times it is difficult to control the amount of information and images

which we encounter. It is worth our while asking ourselves the question: How clean is my inner life? Do I avoid the evil that is increasingly present on all kinds of mass-media? “The one who acts uprightly and speaks honestly, who scorns to get rich by extortion, who rejects bribes out of hand, who refuses to listen to plans involving bloodshed and **shuts his eyes rather than countenance crime**: such a man will live on the heights” (Isaiah 33:15-16). St Clare’s popular maxim tells us that: “We become that which we contemplate”. To paraphrase: we become what we watch. The world’s media are increasingly filled with images which depict ugliness, darkness, brutality – images polluting our imagination and our souls created to accept goodness, beauty and light and God Himself. In order to avoid all that threatens the purity of our inner life, we should learn to practice self-denial (asceticism) in terms of what we look at.

Spiritual vision

Asceticism is the working of the Holy Spirit within us, which is why, without His help, we are powerless in the battle for the purity of our senses. The Holy Spirit gives a person a particular type of vision. We are unable to contemplate God “according to the body” but we can “see Him in the Holy Spirit and discern Him in events, in faces, in all which is made in His image – thanks to the inner image of God we carry in our hearts”, writes André Louf in a work entitled *In the School of Contemplation*. Without the help of the Holy Spirit nobody is capable of properly recognising God or the world He has created.

This is why great masters of the spiritual life teach us to constantly ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit, so He will teach us to close our eyes to evil and open them to the Divine reality.

Let us, therefore, restrain ourselves from watching films which depict brutality or any form of senseless violence and atrocity. Let us also restrain our curiosity, on which the Evil One often feeds.

Before we open any page on the internet, let us ask the Holy Spirit to be with us, to guard what we see and read and extend His vigilance over the content of all that reaches our heart through our eyes.

A Eucharistic gaze

Our eyes must be filled by God, in order to be capable of seeing the truth, distinguish good from evil, beauty from ugliness, light from darkness. A particular opportunity for such spiritual ‘cleansing’ is Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. During adoration we gaze at the Living God, allowing Him to enter our souls by means of our eyes. The contemplation of God purifies our vision. Much depends on our eyes. Healthy eyes mean a healthy gaze. Jesus draws our attention to the fact that pure eyes come from a pure heart: “The lamp of the body is the eye. It follows that if your eye is clear, your whole body will be filled with light; but if your eye is diseased, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then, the light inside you is darkness, what darkness that will be!” (Matthew 6:22-23).

During adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, not only do we gaze upon Jesus, but He gazes on us. This peculiar dialogue of gaze brings to mind Andrei Rublev’s famous icon of the

Blessed Trinity. The gaze of God is a gaze of love. Through adoration we renew in us the truth that we are created in God’s image and likeness.

God wants to transform us into Himself but needs our consent to do this, our trustful “yes”. Asceticism should lead us to a point whereby God and His Will always take first place. For a believer, it should be clear that nothing cleanses our inner self as effectively as the Eucharist. Sometimes we need to say no to ourselves in order, for instance, to go to Mass rather than go out with friends. “Jesus Christ brings about our complete transformation. The effect of a good Holy Communion is the total transformation of our soul in God”, writes Mother Mechtild in *The Mystery of Incomprehensible Love*. God desires to transform us into Himself, and needs only our presence and openness of heart.

Blessed Charles de Foucauld wrote in his spiritual jottings: “The Most Holy Eucharist is Jesus, the whole Jesus! You are whole, alive beloved Jesus, just as you were in the house of the Holy Family in Nazareth, in Mary’s house in Bethany, among the apostles. You are here in the same way. Let us not leave the Holy Eucharist in these moments when Jesus allows us to be in His presence!”

Ending our reflection, we should conclude that asceticism, properly understood, being the work of the Holy Spirit, always leads us to greater richness. In self-denial and the renouncing of temporal pleasures we open ourselves up to experience that which is eternal, not transient and of much greater value than all the pleasures and temptations of this world.

Oskar Styczynski, Poland

The sweetest words that sinful men and women could hope to hear are recorded in the Gospel of Luke, 1:26-38, when the Archangel Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary that she was to have a baby boy, and told her “You shall call Him, Jesus.” Now why should the words, “You shall call Him Jesus”, be the sweetest words we sinners will ever hear? I hope this homily will tell you why.



Jonathan Dick, OSFS, www.unsplash.com

The simple reason is the word Jesus means a saviour. He came to save us from our sins. No other creature's words or deeds are enough to save us. Not even those of God's loveliest creature Mary, but it was through her cooperation that we were given Jesus. Mary had a key role to play in our salvation. We are saved solely by Jesus and His cross. The name of Jesus is precious and His works are sufficiently and super abundantly redemptive.

Later in the Gospel we shall read about an angel who appeared to Joseph because he was troubled when he discovered that Mary was with child. The angel said to him, “Mary will give birth to a son and you shall give Him the name Jesus because He will save His people from their sins” (Mt. 1:21). Now let us ponder on the name of Jesus, see its meaning and the power it carries.

The name of Jesus comes from the Greek *Iesous*, which in turn comes from the Hebrew Joshua. The name Joshua has two meanings. The first one is ‘Lord help!’ In other words, Jesus means ‘O God help!’ It expresses the cry of a mother in childbirth; it is the cry of a hungry man for help;

The Powerful Name of Jesus

it is the cry of a person in deep pain. They all cry out, ‘O God help!’ The name Jesus is beautiful. When we pronounce His name – Jesus – it is a cry for help.

The angel appeared and revealed God's plan

Joseph was perturbed and greatly distressed, when he discovered that Mary was pregnant and that he had no part in it. He would have cried out to God, ‘O God help!’ It was then that the angel appeared to him and revealed God's plan. Mary had conceived not through any man, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. When

Joseph learned the truth about the conception of the Child his agitation ceased. Jesus had helped him. When Joseph cried for help, the angel answered with help from Jesus.

This teaches us that whenever we are desperate for help, we can quietly recite the name Jesus and believe that He will help us.

Jesus saves

The second meaning to the name of Jesus (Joshua) is ‘The Lord is our Salvation’. This is the popular meaning of the name Jesus. ‘Jesus saves.’ This is what St Matthew said in his Gospel, “You shall call Him Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins” (Mt. 1:21). Long before the psalmist David had prayed, “He

will redeem Israel from all its iniquities (Ps. 130:8).

The name of Jesus is not only the sweetest and most precious of all names because it is the name of God's Son, it is also the most powerful of all names. In the Gospel we read that when the disciples returned to Jesus after their first mission they reported back to Him that even the Devil had submitted to them when they used the name Jesus - (Lk. 10:17). St Paul wrote (Phil. 2:9-11) "God has exalted Jesus above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

In the name of Jesus

We also have that lovely story in the Acts of the Apostles when Peter and John went to the temple to pray and a beggar asked for alms. Peter said, "Silver and gold, I have none, but I give to you what I have; in the name of Jesus, get up and walk" (Acts 3:6). The lame beggar was healed and jumped around with joy. This was only achieved through the powerful name of Jesus.

Let us conclude with these words,

*At the name of Jesus
Ev'ry knee shall bow
Ev'ry tongue confess Him,
King of glory now;
'Tis the Father's pleasure
We should call Him Lord,
Who, from the beginning,
Was the mighty Word.*

Fr **Francis Maple** O.F.M Cap.
Franciscan Friary, 15 Cuppin Street
Chester CH1 2BN, England

St Michael is the best

In a few days I'm starting work in the criminal department of the police force. I'm aware it is a very difficult job. I am going to deal with evil on a daily basis. I need the protection of St Michael the Archangel and that is why I decided to accept and wear the Scapular of St Michael.

Linda, UK

I've always been sensitive to injustice. I wanted to punish evil deeds to prevent people from doing wrong. I am a judge. Every day I pray to St Michael for a clear mind to see the truth and to make fair sentences.

Rachel, USA

My grandmother and my mother taught me the prayers to my guardian angel and to St Michael. I even wanted to become a priest but, my life turned out differently. Nevertheless, since my childhood I've maintained a devotion to the angels. Recently, I've been at the hospital where I encouraged other patients to pray to St Michael and Our Lady of Fatima. They seemed interested in our talks and the pictures of Our Lady that I distributed among them. Who is like God!

Richard, Ireland

A while ago I was at the cemetery praying for my husband. The whole cemetery and the paths are



■ St Michael the Archangel of Monte Sant'Angelo, Gargano, Italy

surrounded by trees and bushes. When I was coming back I saw a swarm of hornets flying directly towards me. I was terrified and managed to whisper; "My guardian angel, save me." And suddenly, the hornets just passed me as if I was invisible. I am pretty sure that my guardian angel protected me from their attack.

Teresa, Poland

I have overeaten for years. I tried to lose my weight many times and in many ways, diets and exercises. All in vain. But I found a great ally in my struggle with my appetite. It is St Michael. Each time I ask him for help, my inner compulsion to binge fades away. Of course, I need the support of human beings, my family and, other overeaters, but the prayer comes first. I'm telling you, St Michael has the power!

Irena, Poland

St Michael arrives in Scotland

Fr Peter Prusakiewicz CSMA had the pleasure of ending his UK mission with the pilgrim statue of St Michael at St Augustine's Church, Coatbridge, Scotland.

People came from far and wide for the procession of St Michael the Archangel followed by Mass and Holy Hour on 4th May 2022. It was a truly wonderful occasion with magnificent feedback. People were invested with the scapular of St Michael the Archangel at the end of the service.

Fr Michael Kane and his parish team prepared the young school children in advance by praying the Novena to St Michael. Scapulars, Relic Stones, beads and prayer cards were available for purchase at the back of the church after the celebration.

2022 Tour of Scotland

The tour coordinator, Mary Doogan, indicated that the demand is very strong for a visit of the pilgrim Statue into different parishes over the next several months. Mary's contact email: stmichaeltourofscotland@yahoo.com

During the times when the pilgrim statue is not on tour to other parishes Fr Michael Kane from St Augustine's Church, has prepared a special chapel of the angels to host the pilgrim statue of St Michael the Archangel until 1st March 2023.

Noreen Bavister, Deputy Editor



■ Coordinator Mary Doogan and Joseph Howard



■ Welcoming the statue of St Michael



■ Time for personal prayer



■ Fr Michale Kane and Fr Peter, St Augustine's Church, Coatbridge, Scotland



■ Fr Gabor Czako and Fr Peter, St Peter's Church, Aberdeen (with smaller statue of St Michael)

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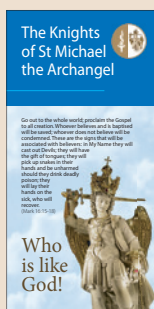
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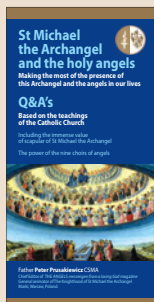
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St Faustina and St Michael

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



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**Details of churches / shops
and distributors – see subscription
form inside middle of magazine**

Chaplet of St Michael

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

A. *Amen*

Say the following prayer on the medal:

O God, come to my assistance.

O Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

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

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

2. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Cherubim, may the Lord vouchsafe to grant us grace to leave the ways

of wickedness, to run in the paths of Christian perfection. Amen.

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

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

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

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

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

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

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

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

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

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

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

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

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)



9. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Angels, may the Lord grant us to be protected by them in this mortal life and conducted hereafter to eternal glory. Amen.

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

Recite on the next four beads:

1 Our Father in honour of St Michael

1 Our Father in honour of St Gabriel

1 Our Father in honour of St Raphael

1 Our Father in honour of our Guardian Angel

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

Prayer of Pope Leo XIII

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