



A Catholic Magazine on the Holy Angels | Vol 14 • issue 3 • 2023 | £ 2,50 € 3,00 \$ 7,00 | ISSN 2081-5077

# The Angels

Messengers from a loving God



## St Michael comes to London

The Holy Spirit: Missing in action?  
From darkness to Divine encounter

Dress code of St Michael  
What does Jesus feel like  
in the tabernacle?



# All the angels honour Our Blessed Mother as their Queen

**T**he highest Choirs of Angels who dwell closest to the Throne of God are the Seraphim, the Cherubim and the Thrones. All these holy angels are pure spirits of contemplation. Their holiness is so intense that the human mind is incapable of comprehending their levels of adoration and participation in the Divinity.

It was during Isaiah's vision, that we are made aware of the Seraphim angels. Isaiah goes on to describe these attendants or guardians in detail as they appeared in his vision, around the heavenly throne in a double choir and the volume of their chorus, while locked in an eternal song of praise, glory and majesty for the Lord of Heaven. They relentlessly sang "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts.

The first hierarchy of angels is so high and divinely intimate that no other creature other than Our Lady and St Michael the Archangel has access to these angels directly. Our Blessed Mother, the Queen of Angels



has direct access to God through Jesus without the use of any angels.

St Michael obtained his place through his great victory over the rebellious angels. Those who are able to pray fervently to the level of a burning fire of love for God have their prayer transported by Seraphic angelic communication.

Our Blessed Mother sends the Seraphim to gather our prayers and transport them into her holy Immaculate Heart, where her prayer requests are communicated directly to God, through her Son Jesus Christ. Pray to St Michael, your guardian angel and the nine choirs of angels often.

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

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 A Catholic Quarterly Magazine on Holy Angels

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# Divine Mercy as a way of life (part 2)

## The Role of Mercy in Our Lives

Doctor Bryan S. Thatcher, MD, of Tampa, Florida, USA, wrote in Part 1 of the Septemeber issue on the Role of Forgiveness and Trust. He is a retired medical doctor who travels the world speaking on the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, the message of Divine Mercy, and his personal conversion.

Divine Mercy is more than a message or devotion, rather, it is a “Way of Life.”

## Mercy

Let us reflect on God’s mercy and what He told St Faustina, “My daughter, do you think that you have written enough about My mercy? What you have written is but a drop compared to the ocean. I am Love and Mercy itself. There is no misery that could be a match for My mercy, neither will misery exhaust it, because as it is being granted — it increases. The soul that trusts in My mercy is most fortunate, because I Myself take care of it” (Diary, 1273).

Mercy is love that seeks to forgive, console, assist and care for others in time of need. Mercy is an act of love done without expecting anything in return; it is done for love itself. Our Lord gave of Himself on



■ The Divine Mercy Shrine in El Salvador, Misamis Oriental, Philippines

Holy Thursday when He instituted the Most Blessed Sacrament; the Eucharist perpetuates this act of self-giving daily on altars throughout the world. Jesus made it clear in Sacred Scripture that love of God and neighbour is the greatest commandment: “*But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they came together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, to test Him. ‘Teacher, what is the great commandment in the law?’ And He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these*

*two commandments depend all the law and the prophets’*” (Mt 22:34-40).

Our Lord wants us both to know of His unfathomable mercy and to be merciful to others, as He is merciful to us. Jesus told Saint Faustina: “Proclaim that mercy is the greatest attribute of God. All the works of My hands are crowned with mercy” (Diary, 301).

Imagine the love and pity our Lord had for the repentant sinner, Mary Magdalene. He read her heart and knew how penitent she was, much more so than the self-righteous Pharisees, who thought that the Kingdom of God belonged to them because of their social status. “*This people draw near with their mouth and honour*

*Me with their lips, while their hearts are far from Me” (Is 29:13).*

And when we sin, He wants us to humble ourselves, come back to Him, and ask for forgiveness. He told St Faustina, “The greater the sinner, the greater the right he has to My mercy. My mercy is confirmed in every work of My hands. He who trusts in My mercy will not perish, for all his affairs are Mine, and his enemies will be shattered at the base of My footstool” (Diary, 723).

The Lord wants us to return to Him with humility. “*For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away His face from you, if you return to Him*” (2 Chr 30:9). “*Yet even now, says the Lord, return to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments*” (Joel 2:12).

Many of us fall into a downward spiral of sin and guilt, believing we could never be forgiven, let alone approach God because of our wretchedness and sinfulness. But Jesus shared meals with tax collectors and prostitutes, saying, “*I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*” (Lk 5:32).

## Few are willing to accept the graces

He told St Faustina that “He is ready to grant graces to souls, but few are willing to accept them. My Heart overflows with great mercy for souls, and especially for poor sinners. If only they could understand that I am the best of Fathers to them and that it is for them that the Blood and Water flowed from My heart as from a fount overflowing with mercy” (Diary, 367).

And as in the parable of the prodigal son, the Lord will always take us back with open arms: “*But when the goodness*

*and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit*” (Tit 3:4-5). Can we love God without forgiving, loving and being merciful to our neighbour? Scripture is clear on this, “*If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen*” (1 Jn 5:20).

## We should strive to see Jesus in others

We are to be merciful to others just as we are to ask for His mercy. “*Be merciful even as your Father is merciful*” (Lk 6:36). This can be accomplished in a number of ways. St Faustina wrote, “For there are three ways of performing an act of mercy: The merciful word, by forgiving and by comforting; secondly, if you can offer no word, then pray — that too is mercy; and thirdly, deeds of mercy” (Diary, 1158). At any point in time, we may not be able to say a merciful word or perform a deed of mercy, but prayer is within the grasp of every soul. And when we perform deeds of mercy, we should strive to see Jesus in our fellow man.

## Help me, O Lord

St Faustina recognized her shortcomings and prayed that she would be a reflection of His great mercy. She wrote: “Help me, O Lord, that my eyes may be merciful, so that I may never suspect or judge from appearances, but look for what is beautiful in my neighbours’ souls and come to their rescue.

Help me, that my ears may be merciful, so that I may give heed to my

neighbours’ needs and not be indifferent to their pains and moanings.

Help me, O Lord, that my tongue may be merciful, so that I should never speak negatively of my neighbour, but have a word of comfort and forgiveness for all.

Help me, O Lord, that my hands may be merciful and filled with good deeds, so that I may do only good to my neighbours and take upon myself the more difficult and toilsome tasks.

Help me, that my feet may be merciful, so that I may hurry to assist my neighbour, overcoming my own fatigue and weariness. My true rest is in the service of my neighbour.

Help me, O Lord, that my heart may be merciful so that I myself may feel all the sufferings of my neighbour. I will refuse my heart to no one. I will be sincere even with those who, I know, will abuse my kindness. And I will lock myself up in the most merciful Heart of Jesus. I will bear my own suffering in silence. May Your mercy, O Lord, rest upon me” (Diary, 163).

## I wish I could do great things

The ministry of the Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy involves corporal works of mercy projects all over the world, and people often say to me, “I wish I could do such great things!” They marvel at the containers of medical supplies, wheelchairs, clothing and religious articles that we ship to the poorest of the poor. And in many ways, it is amazing. But most don’t realize that it is the little things in life, done out of great love for God, that are most pleasing to Him.

It is much easier to box children’s shoes for Africa than it is to be merciful to a teenage son who is breaking





every rule in the house! It is much easier to visit an unknown AIDS victim in the hospital than it is to be merciful to a pregnant unwed daughter. Few are called to travel to faraway places and evangelize; but all are called to be witnesses and evangelists in our own family and workplace!

## The power of prayer

Many of us minimize the power of prayer and the spiritual works of mercy, fearing that we have not done enough corporal works of mercy. Jesus told St Faustina: "I know, My daughter, that you understand it and that you do everything within your power. But write this for the many souls who are often worried because they do not have the material means with which to carry out an act of mercy. Yet spiritual mercy, which requires neither permissions nor storehouses, is much more meritorious and is within the grasp of every soul. If a soul does not exercise mercy somehow or other, it will not obtain mercy on the day of judgment. Oh, if only souls knew how to gather eternal treasure for themselves, they would not be judged, for they would forestall My judgment with their mercy" (Diary, 1317).

Many of us remember learning as children about the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. The spiritual works call us to:

- 1) admonish the sinner,
- 2) instruct the ignorant,
- 3) counsel the doubtful,
- 4) comfort the sorrowful,
- 5) bear wrongs patiently,
- 6) forgive all injuries,
- 7) pray for the living and the dead.

The corporal works include:

- 1) feed the hungry,
- 2) give drink to the thirsty,
- 3) clothe the naked,
- 4) visit prisoners,
- 5) shelter the homeless,
- 6) visit the sick and
- 7) bury the dead.

We should try to do at least one work of mercy every day. As we heal from the battles of life and continue our spiritual journey, we must let others know of God's unfathomable mercy.

We are to be the light of the world, spreading the Good News of His great mercy. *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven"* (Mt 5:16).

We must show love and mercy to all, not just those in our social class or from whom we will benefit socially or financially. *"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Mt 5:20). We should strive to comfort the hurting through corporal and spiritual works of mercy, reminding those in need that only God can bring true and lasting peace. We are to be the heart, hands and feet of Jesus, radiating the merciful love of the Divine Mercy to a hurting world. O Lord, give us the courage to ask for Your mercy and strength to be merciful to others. Help us become a beacon of bright light, guiding others in an unsettled and troubled world back to You, who are Love and Mercy Itself.

The Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy are building the body of Christ through its worldwide network of prayer cenacles. This guided study program for prayer communities includes the study of Sacred Scripture, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Diary of St Faustina. The apostolate also promotes Eucharistic Adoration, together with hourly praying of the Divine Mercy Chaplet for the sick and dying. For more information, go to our website at [www.thedivinemercy.org/eadm](http://www.thedivinemercy.org/eadm)

You also can gain a wealth of information from the series, "Mercy Unbound," at [www.drbyranthatcher.com](http://www.drbyranthatcher.com) These are over 125 interviews with priests, religious, scientists, laity with incredible witness and the show aims to bring hope and an avenue for healing to all.

Dr **Bryan Thatcher**,  
Director Eucharistic Apostles  
of Divine Mercy, USA

# The Holy Spirit: “Missing in Action”?

## A biblical meditation

Many years ago a church historian said that in the history of western Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, all too often the Holy Spirit has been the “missing person” of the Blessed Trinity. He pops up occasionally in western liturgies, especially at Pentecost, and he takes center stage when the gift of the Spirit is bestowed in Baptism, and strengthened in Confirmation. Otherwise, however, we rarely hear about him, and he seems to play only a very minor role in the daily life of ordinary believers.

In the years since that historian offered his critique of the West, however, we have witnessed the rise of Protestant “Pentecostalism,” and the Catholic “charismatic” movement, with their rediscovery of the special gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as prophecy, healing, and tongues. Still, these are *extraordinary* manifestations of the Spirit’s presence and work in the life of the Church. Ordinarily, Catholics focus their devotional life on God the Father (as in the Lord’s Prayer), on his beloved Son Jesus Christ (especially in the Mass and in Eucharistic Adoration, devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Divine Mercy), and on the spouse of the Holy Spirit, the Blessed Virgin Mary. Catholic Sacred Art also centers on

these themes. The Holy Spirit himself, however, seems a vague figure, relegated to the background.

Eastern Orthodox Christians have long noticed this shortcoming in the faith and life of their western brethren. Some eastern theologians even claim that it is the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity itself that is responsible for this marginalization of the Holy Spirit in the minds and hearts of western Christians. They cite in particular St Augustine’s famous analogy for the Trinity, still frequently used today to help Catholics understand this mystery. The Trinity is said to be like a Lover (God the Father), His Beloved (God the Son), and the bond of love between them (God the Holy Spirit). We see this depicted in many Catholic paintings of the Trinity as well: especially ones that show the Father and the Son seated on thrones side-by-side, with the dove of the Holy Spirit hovering and shining over and between them. According to eastern theologians, this way of understanding and depicting the Trinity tends to subordinate the Holy Spirit to the other two divine persons. He is merely a quality (love), and an energy binding together the other two, but not really a fully a divine “person” as they are.

To be fair, St Augustine actually offered 19 different analogies for the Trinity in his great work on the

subject, and never intended just one of them to be taken as a completely adequate illustration of this holy mystery. Still, our eastern brothers and sisters have a point: all too often, in western Christianity generally as it is lived out day by day, the Holy Spirit seems to be “missing in action.”

## The Spirit of God is fully Personal, and fully Divine

The Bible and Catholic Tradition, however, clearly teach that the Holy Spirit is entirely equal in nature to the other two persons of the Trinity: fully divine and fully personal. When Jesus said we are all to be baptized “in the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19) there was no indication that he was referring to a mixture of divine and created persons: all three are included in the true name of God.

The apostolic Church both experienced and spoke of the Holy Spirit in fully divine terms. At least implicitly, the Holy Spirit was said to be omnipotent (Lk 1:35), omniscient (Rom 8:27), omnipresent (Acts 2:17) and eternal (Heb 9:14) — all attributes of divinity.

Fully divine, the Spirit is also fully “personal.” He conceives purposes (Acts 8:29: “And the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go up and join this chariot;’” cf. Acts 13:2, and 1 Cor 12:11); he





■ The Holy Trinity by Andrés López, 1780

guides the understanding and decisions of the apostles (Acts 15:28: “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things ...”), and he “intercedes” for us in prayer (“[T]he Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words,” Rom 8:26). The Spirit can

be “grieved” by the sins of humanity (Eph 4:30), and he can even be lied to (Acts 5:3: “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?”). The Holy Spirit appears to be a distinct personal reality who even has “conversations,” so to speak, with the Father and the Son. According to St Paul, the Spirit

within us in prayer bears witness by enabling us to cry with him, “Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15-16 and 26-27). The implication here is that when our prayer falters, it is taken up by the Spirit into his own intra-divine dialogue with the Father.

In the teachings of Jesus, the emphasis on the personal reality of the Holy Spirit is so pronounced that in John 16:13-15, Jesus refers to the Spirit as “he” nine times in three verses. The Spirit’s personal reality is even emphasised at the expense of strict grammatical procedure in John 14:26; 15:26; 16:8, 13-15, where the emphatic pronoun *ekeinos*, “he,” is used of him in the masculine, whereas the noun *pneuma* [Spirit] is actually neuter in Greek. Thus, to refer to the Spirit as “it” would have been more proper. Yet Jesus says:

“I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, *he* will guide you into all the truth; for *he* will not speak on his own authority, but whatever *he* hears *he* will speak, and *he* will declare to you the things that are to come. *He* will glorify me, for *he* will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that *he* will take what is mine and declare it to you.” (Jn 16:13-15)

## Not an Occasional Visitor, but an Abiding Gift

The New Testament tells us that the Holy Spirit is God’s free and gracious gift to us. He pours out from the loving Heart of Jesus on all those who thirst to know and experience God’s love: “[Jesus said] If any one thirst, let him come to me, and let him who believes in me drink. As the scripture

has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water’” (Jn 7:37-38). According to St Paul: “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom 5:5).

As an authentic supernatural gift of divine love, he comes into our hearts to meet one specific need, above all. The great evangelist Billy Graham put it this way in his book *The Holy Spirit* (1980):

“Man has two great spiritual needs. One is for forgiveness. The other is for goodness. Consciously or unconsciously, his inner being longs for both...

“God heard [our] cry for help, that cry for forgiveness, and answered it at Calvary. God sent his only son into the world to die for our sins, so that we might be forgiven...

“But God also heard a second cry, that cry for goodness, and answered it at Pentecost. God does not want us to come to Christ by faith, and then lead a life of defeat, discouragement, and dissension ... *To the great gift of forgiveness God adds also the gift of the Holy Spirit.* He is the source of power who meets our need to escape from the miserable weakness that grips us. He gives us the power to be truly good.” (p. xi-xii)

Moreover, like all true love-gifts, the Spirit is a gift that God never takes back or rescinds. We can certainly obstruct what he wants to do in us and through us; we can block all the goodness that he longs to impart to us, but he will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb 13:5). Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would “abide with us forever” (Jn 14:6). If his active presence ever seems missing from our lives, therefore, it can only be because *we* have forsaken *him*.

## Where can we Encounter the Holy Spirit?

If the Holy Spirit is such a vital gift, how can we find him, and what can we do to open our hearts to him more and more?

To begin with, since he is a fully divine person of the Trinity, he is “omnipresent”: we can encounter him anywhere and everywhere. He fills the whole created universe, so he is actually never far away (even if we sometimes *feel* as if he is “missing” from our lives). Psalm 139 reassures us:

“Wither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or wither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, thou art there! If I make my bed in Sheol [the realm of the dead], thou art there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there thy hand shall lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, ‘Let only the darkness cover me, and the light about me be night,’ even the darkness is not dark to thee, the night is as bright as the day; for darkness is as light to thee.” (Ps 139: 7-12)

Above all, the Spirit of God fills the whole life of the Church, in all its parts and members. The Church is his own special dwelling place; he unites it by his love and builds it up into a Holy Temple to the Lord of worship and service (Eph 2:21-22; 4:3). Thus, although it is true that he is everywhere abroad in the world, so that there is no place where we could find ourselves utterly cut off from him, still, it is only in the Church, the Body of Christ, that we can find the *fullness* of the divine life that he seeks to impart. As St Paul wrote:

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all members of the body, though many, are one

body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” (I Cor 12:13-14).

As St Paul just reminded us, the special indwelling of the Holy Spirit is God’s free gift to all who are baptised into Christ, and ordinarily it is also in the communion and fellowship of the Church that we can encounter him in the most powerful and life-transforming way. Filled with the life of the Spirit, the Church is like a petrol “filling station,” so to speak — the station to which we can go to be filled and refilled with the graces of the Holy Spirit that we need on our life journey. St Paul therefore exhorts the Christians in Ephesus to “be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18) — and the Greek text of his epistle here also can be translated: “Be being filled” or “Keep on being filled.”

One place we can go for this continual refueling of divine love, of course, is to the Holy Scriptures. The New Testament tells us that all the scriptures were “breathed out” (Greek: *theopneustos*) by God, the authors of each book “inspired” by the Spirit to write what they did for our benefit (2 Tim 3:15; 2 Pet 1:21). Whenever we prayerfully read and truly listen to the Word of the Lord, therefore, they can become words of fire — the supernatural fire of the Holy Spirit — so that we will be able to testify from personal experience what the disciples testified, from their own experience on the road to Emmaus: “Did not our hearts *burn within us* while [Jesus] talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Lk 24:32).

God’s Spirit is alive and well at every Holy Eucharist too, for at the





Shalene Cason, www.unsplash.com

invocation prayer at Mass the priest asks him to transform the bread and wine on the holy altar into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ: “Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body + and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ” (Eucharistic Prayer II; the Spirit is explicitly invoked over the gifts also in Eucharistic Prayers III and IV).

To be sure, we must not idealize the presence and activity of the Spirit in the life of the Church. After all, the Church is not only a filling station (so to speak), but also a hospital: a recovery clinic for sinners who all too often squander the graces they have been given. By our sins we wound our own hearts, poison the fellowship of the followers of Christ, and scandalise unbelievers. But the Holy Spirit is alive and at work in the Church even when its members wander far from the path of divine love. In fact, Jesus tells us that when he pours out the Spirit into our

lives it often “convicts” us of our sin (Jn 16:8). In the search-light of the Spirit our sins are exposed; we finally have the chance to own up to them, and find forgiveness, spiritual healing, and a fresh start. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn 1:8-9; cf. Jn 20:22-23; Jas 5:16).

That’s why one of the chief works of the Spirit in the life of the Church is continually to lead the faithful to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where God’s forgiving, healing, and sanctifying love is poured out in abundance. St Faustina referred to this sacrament as a “fountain” of Divine Mercy. Jesus once said to her:

“Tell souls that from this fount of mercy souls draw graces solely with the vessel of trust. If their trust is great, there is no limit to My generosity. The torrents of grace inundate humble souls.” (Diary, 1602)

Those “torrents of grace” are the graces that flow from the “living water” of the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised to us, and that He pours into our hearts from his own merciful Heart (Jn 7:37-38).

## The Holy Spirit accompanies Us on our Journey

In fact, every form of prayer (liturgical and sacramental, individual and personal) can only lead us to God when the Holy Spirit within us enables us to pray. St Paul writes: “When we cry ‘Abba, Father!’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:15-16). Also, it is only by the Holy Spirit that we can sincerely confess that “Jesus is Lord” (1 Cor 12:13). The very definition of a Christian is one who can make that confession, and who lives each day by the life of that same Spirit abiding in his heart,

and guiding his steps. That's why St Paul tells us:

"Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive .... For all we who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God." (Rom 8:9, 14)

The Spirit of God also helps us in our infirmities, if we permit him to. In response to our earnest prayers, the Spirit aids us in our times of weakness; "for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words" (Rom 8:26). He guides us by his divine light, and comforts us in all our struggles and tribulations (Acts 9:31).

At the same time, he will never let us become complacent, fully satisfied with ourselves, lest our walk with Christ grind to a halt. Although he loves us just as we are, he loves us too much to leave us that way, stuck in our habitual sins. That is why the Bible tells us that he is also like a "refiner's fire" (Mal 3:2), who will never rest, nor let us rest, until we are fully melted down, purified, and reshaped into the saints that our Lord always intended us to be. All our pride, our selfishness, our greed and lust, and our neglect of the needs of others must be purified as gold is refined in a furnace (Mal 3:3). For our own good, and for the good of the Kingdom, he wants us to go through the full treatment, so that more and more we belong to Jesus Christ as his true disciples: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18).

If we want to see what the end-product of this process looks like, we need only look into the tender eyes of our Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary. She was the one completely filled and sanctified by the grace of the Holy Spirit from the very moment of her conception (Lk 1:28); specially overshadowed by the Spirit at the moment of the Incarnation of her son (Lk 1:35); and assumed body and soul into heaven in the Spirit at her journey's end (Rev 11:19-12:1, 5).

In short, like her we are called to be completely "sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Rom 15:16; 1 Thess 4:3), the Spirit of truth and love (Jn 16:13; Gal 5:22), until one day we are fully mature and complete in Christ (Eph 4:11-16), and thereby fully prepared to share with all the saints in the everlasting life of the Blessed Trinity (Rom 6:22; Rev 22:1-5).

In that holy fellowship, we will finally understand, and fully appreciate that the Holy Spirit was never "missing in action": he was alive and at work for us, and within us, in every step we ever took on the road to heaven. He was the one who enabled us never to lose hope, even when all seemed dark, and our crosses heavier than we thought we could bear. He was the life of our life, the refreshment of our spirit, and the light that showed us the way home.

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you might abound in hope." (Rom 15:13)

**Robert Stackpole, STD**

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

## God is restless until he rests in the heart of man

The Gospel tells of Jesus who visits as a guest. We see Him in the house of the publican Matthew, receiving the hospitality of Mary and Martha, (Luke 10:38-42), and in the many feasts that were held in his honour. All these meetings have a common denominator. Jesus goes to visit people who do not particularly expect it, and at the same time he does not go to those who, by virtue of their positions, would deserve such a visit.

## God wants to live with people under the same roof

A fair question can therefore be asked. Where does our Lord love to dwell? Who does he want to spend time with and who does he feel comfortable with? This question seems to be answered by the Pharisees themselves. After all, they reproach him for "going to sinners and tax collectors and eating with them". Jesus, on the other hand, does nothing about these reproaches and consistently goes to the people he calls his friends. The spiritual message of this attitude is obvious: God wants to live with people under the same roof. It breaks our idea of the distance between God and people. He is a real man, that's why he feels good among people. From this is born the closeness and plan of God who, through this closeness, wants to convince people of the salvation that he proposes to them.



# What does Jesus feel like in the tabernacle?

## Veneration and adoration

We should consider this thought in our lives. The place of God's presence in our Catholic minds is the tabernacle – the golden box where the Blessed Sacrament is kept. That is why we kneel before him in church, and during prayer we look at him. This “holy saint” is strongly imprinted in our soul as an object of special veneration and even adoration. However, it is worth listening to two thoughts that people of great spirit left us.

The Servant of God, Sister Wanda Boniszewska, wrote that Jesus in the tabernacle experienced similar sufferings as during his imprisonment before being sentenced to death. The closed and dark room does indeed resemble a prison cell. It is not without reason that on Holy Thursday we put Jesus in darkness. Jesus, deprived of his freedom, wants to give freedom to those who will receive him.

Father Garrigou-Lagrange also gives an interesting idea in his textbook on spiritual life. He mentions a teaching dating back to the Middle Ages, where it was stated that the desire of Jesus in the Eucharist is not to be in a closed tabernacle, but in the human heart. The Blessed Sacrament is to be not only adored by people in a monstrance, but also



received as Holy Communion. It is man who is to become a living monstrance. It is therefore possible to reverse the famous words of St Augustine: “The heart of man is

restless until it rests in God” and say: “God is restless until he rests in the heart of man”.

Fr **Matthew Szerszeń** CSMA

# Foundations of the Christian angelic hierarchy

**What we know about angels today has been shaped mainly by two of the greatest Catholic minds of the Middle Ages: Pseudo-Dionysius Aeropagite and St Thomas Aquinas.**

**I**n Scripture we can easily find and distinguish many names used to designate heavenly beings. All the Fathers of the Church agree that the various names of angels that we find in the Scripture suggest differences between them. It is not surprising, therefore, that as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> century an attempt was made by the Church Fathers to classify them.

The foundations of the Christian angelic hierarchy were laid by the anonymous monk Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, also known as Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, who lived at the turn of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, and who described the strict construction of successive angelic entities in his treatise *The Celestial Hierarchy*.

## Hierarchy of Angels

Pseudo-Dionysius developed the idea of a celestial hierarchy, which consists of three triads (nine orders) of angels. Each triad has its own specific role and function in the divine order. The hierarchy, from highest to lowest, includes Seraphim, Cherubim,

Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels and Angels. These celestial beings serve as intermediaries between God and the material world, with each order having its unique purpose in carrying out God's will.

## Angelic Attributes

Various qualities were attributed to angels. Pseudo-Dionysius described them as spiritual beings, pure and immaterial, lacking physical bodies. They possess intelligence, will and the ability to communicate directly with God. Angels are also seen as beings of light, symbolizing their divine nature and their role as messengers of God's divine illumination.

## Angelic Ministry

According to Pseudo-Dionysius, angels are God's messengers and instruments of divine providence. They guide and govern the cosmos, ensuring that everything functions in accordance with God's divine plan. Angels also play a role in human salvation by

inspiring individuals towards spiritual growth and leading them to a deeper understanding of God.

## Hierarchy's Role

Pseudo-Dionysius believed that the angelic hierarchy reflects the order and harmony within the divine realm. The higher orders of angels (such as Seraphim and Cherubim) are closer to God and possess a deep insight and knowledge of His divine mysteries, while the lower orders (such as Archangels and Angels) interact more directly with human affairs.

## Mystical Aspects

Pseudo-Dionysius emphasized the significance of mysticism and contemplation in understanding the angelic hierarchy. He believed that individuals could ascend the spiritual ladder of the celestial hierarchy through contemplative prayer and divine illumination. As one progresses spiritually, they become more attuned to the angelic realm and draw closer to God.





■ Two Angels Floating, painting by Johann von Schraudolph, 1865

## Development of Catholic Angeology

Pseudo-Dionysius's teachings on angels and the celestial hierarchy have had a profound influence on Christian mysticism and theology throughout the centuries. His work has inspired many theologians and mystics to explore the nature of angels, their role in the spiritual life and their connection to divine revelation.

One of them was St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), an Italian Dominican friar and priest. As a prominent Catholic theologian and philosopher, he had significant teachings on angels, which are outlined in his influential work *Summa Theologica*, written between 1265–1274, and other theological writings. He continued and developed Catholic teaching on angels.

Aquinas argued for the existence of angels as purely spiritual beings created by God. He believed that angels are incorporeal, meaning they do not have physical bodies like humans.

Aquinas proposed a hierarchical order among angels, classifying

them into different orders or choirs. In his schema, there are nine choirs of angels divided into three triads: the highest triad (Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones), the middle triad (Dominions, Virtues and Powers), and the lowest triad (Principalities, Archangels and Angels). Influences of Pseudo-Dionysius' views are easily seen in this division.

## Angelic Nature and Role

Angels have intellect and will, similar to humans but without the limitations of the body. He believed that angels possess superior intellect, allowing them to have a deep understanding of God and divine truths. They possess innate knowledge, meaning they have direct access to divine truths without the need for reasoning or learning. Their knowledge is immediate and comprehensive.

Angels also have free will, enabling them to make moral choices. However, he believed that once angels made a decision, their wills are unchangeable, as they have perfect knowledge and cannot sin.

Aquinas affirmed the existence of fallen angels, led by Lucifer (Satan), who rebelled against God and were cast out of heaven. He regarded their rebellion as a result of their misuse of free will.

Angels' main role is to continuously worship and praise God, as they are in a constant state of contemplation and adoration. Their primary purpose is to glorify God and carry out His divine plan.

## Guardian Angels

Apart from their main role of glorifying God, Aquinas assigned specific roles to angels, emphasizing their function as messengers and servants of God. Angels act as intermediaries between God and humans, conveying divine messages and carrying out God's will in the world.

Aquinas endorsed the belief in guardian angels, asserting that each individual is assigned a guardian angel by God to guide and protect them throughout their lives. He believed that guardian angels are actively involved in the spiritual development and well-being of individuals.

St Thomas Aquinas' teachings on angels have had a profound influence on Catholic theology and continue to shape the Church's understanding of these spiritual beings. His systematic approach to angelology remains a significant part of Catholic doctrine and philosophy.

**Charles Armstrong**, U.K.

Based on *The Celestial Hierarchy* by Pseudo-Dionysius Aeropagite, text available on [www.en.wikisource.org](http://www.en.wikisource.org) and *Summa Theologica* by St Thomas Aquinas, text available on the website of a digital library The Internet Archive, [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)

# Dress code of St Michael

At the centre of Monte Sant'Angelo, the picturesque town in Italy, there is the Shrine of St Michael, called the Celestial Basilica, which the Archangel chose and consecrated by himself. At the heart of the Celestial Basilica stands a remarkable masterpiece that commands both reverence and admiration – the statue of St Michael.

**E**ncased within an exquisite container adorned with silver and Bohemian glass, this Carrara marble sculpture stands at a majestic height of 1 meter and 30 centimetres. Crafted by the skilled hands of Andrea Contucci, also known as Sansovino (1467-1529), this timeless work of art found its resting place within the sacred grotto in the historic year of 1507.

This striking work of art has captured the attention of pilgrims and art enthusiasts alike, not only for its exquisite craftsmanship but also for the profound symbolism embodied by the crown, sword and clothing of the ancient Roman soldier, the ring and a bracelet with an eagle depicted in the statue.

## The Crown: Symbol of Heavenly Authority

At first glance, one cannot help but be drawn to the magnificent crown adorning the head of St Michael. The crown is a symbol of authority, sovereignty and triumph. In the Christian tradition, it represents the divine

authority that St Michael wields as the leader of the heavenly armies.

The crown also serves as a reminder of St Michael's victory over evil, as depicted in the Book of Revelation, where he leads the angels in a cosmic battle against the dragon. This victory symbolises the triumph of good over evil, light over darkness, and serves as an inspiration for believers to overcome the challenges and temptations they face in their earthly lives.

## The Sword: Weapon of Spiritual Warfare

Held firmly in St Michael's hand is a resplendent sword, a powerful symbol of spiritual warfare. The sword signifies St Michael's role as the defender of the faith and protector of God's people. It is a reminder that he stands ready to combat the forces of evil and defend the Church and its faithful.

In the statue, the sword is depicted raised high, ready to strike down the adversary. This dynamic pose conveys the idea that St Michael is not merely a passive observer but an active warrior, ever-vigilant against the spiritual



battles that rage in the world. Believers are encouraged to take inspiration from St Michael's commitment to defending the faith and to take up their own spiritual weapons in the fight against sin and temptation.

## The Clothing: A Connection to Ancient Rome

There is the intricately designed clothing worn by the Roman soldier in the statue. This attire harkens back to ancient Rome, a time when the Christian faith was in its infancy and faced persecution from the Roman authorities.

The choice of clothing is deliberate, serving as a historical link to the early Christian martyrs who faced persecution and martyrdom under Roman rule. St Michael, dressed as a Roman soldier, embodies the resilience and courage of those early Christians who stood firm in their faith, even in the face of adversity.

The clothing also symbolizes the universality of the Christian message.



St Michael, as a Roman soldier, transcends cultural and geographical boundaries, reminding us that the message of Christianity is meant for all people, regardless of their background or nationality.

### **The Chain: an Ultimate Victory over Evil**

In the sculpture of St Michael, the chain clutched firmly in the Archangel's hand as he triumphantly subdues the devil beneath his feet. This chain is not merely a decorative detail but a powerful emblem of divine authority and the ultimate victory of good over evil.

The chain in St Michael's hand symbolises the unbreakable bond between heaven and Earth, signifying the celestial authority bestowed upon him by the Almighty. It represents the spiritual restraint that St Michael exercises over the forces of darkness, acting as a celestial jailer who binds the devil, ensuring he can no longer sow discord and temptation among humanity.

The chain also serves as a reminder of the eternal struggle between good and evil. As St Michael stands triumphant with one foot placed firmly on the subdued devil, the chain serves as a testament to the Archangel's unwavering commitment to protect the faithful from the perils of sin and malevolence. It signifies the power of faith and righteousness to conquer the temptations and vices that often ensnare human souls.

### **The Ring: A Pledge of Loyalty**

The ring adorning St Michael's hand is a profound emblem of

authority and divine commitment. In many cultures, a ring is a symbol of unity, eternity and faithfulness. It represents a covenant or a pledge of loyalty. In the case of St Michael, the ring symbolises his unwavering commitment to carrying out God's will and defending the faithful. It signifies his eternal bond with the divine and his role as a heavenly warrior. This ring is a reminder that St Michael's actions are in accordance with the divine plan, and his authority is granted by God Himself.

### **The Eagle: Vigilant Watchfulness**

The eagle on his bracelet further enhances the symbolism of the statue. The eagle has been a symbol of strength, courage and vision throughout history, often associated with the divine. In various cultures, the eagle is considered a messenger between the earthly realm and the heavens, making it a fitting symbol for St Michael. The bracelet serves as a visual representation of his vigilant watchfulness and keen perception in identifying and confronting evil.

It conveys the message that St Michael is not only a celestial warrior but also a faithful servant of God. It emphasises his commitment to protecting the faithful, acting as a guardian, and carrying out his divine duties with unwavering resolve.

### **Ancient Roman Sandals: Determination to Protect**

There is one more often-overlooked yet symbolically significant element in the statue of St Michael. It is the representation of ancient Roman sandals on the Archangel's feet. These

sandals, sculpted with meticulous care, serve as a profound link to the past and convey essential messages about the celestial warrior's role.

The presence of ancient Roman sandals, akin to those worn by soldiers during the time of the Roman Empire, pays homage to St Michael's role as a celestial protector and defender. Just as the Roman soldiers marched into battle with determination, St Michael stands ready to confront the forces of evil and darkness.

These sandals, while rooted in history, also hold contemporary significance. They serve as a reminder that the battle between good and evil is ongoing, transcending the confines of time. St Michael, in his timeless role, continues to shield and safeguard believers from spiritual adversaries.

The statue of St Michael, a testament to the genius of Sansovino, embodies the Archangel's divine strength and celestial grace. With intricate details that breathe life into the marble, it captures the very essence of this heavenly warrior. St Michael, often depicted as a symbol of protection and triumph over evil, stands as a profound symbol of faith for all who set foot in this hallowed sanctuary.

This revered masterpiece is not merely a work of art but a tangible link to centuries of devotion and spiritual pilgrimage. Its presence within the Miraculous Grotto serves as a powerful reminder of the enduring connection between the faithful and St Michael the Archangel, offering solace, hope and inspiration to all who come to pay homage to this celestial guardian.

**Angela Taylor, U.K.**

# The Church beatifies a Polish family of nine

**On March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1944, in Markowa, south-east Poland, Joseph (Józef) and Victoria (Wiktoria) Ulma, along with their children and the Jews they were hiding were killed.**

**B**efore World War II, the village of Markowa, south-east of Poland had approximately 4,500 residents, approximately 120 of them being of Jewish origin. Although for religious and cultural reasons, the Polish and Jewish communities lived alongside each other rather than intermingling, their relations were generally good. The Jewish residents of Markowa were primarily engaged in trade and agriculture, and their children attended schools alongside their Polish peers.

The Ulma family ran a farm – Joseph (Józef) specialized in growing vegetables and fruits, beekeeping and breeding silkworms, and his passion was photography; he was also socially engaged. Victoria (Wiktoria) managed the household and took care of the children. They lived away from the farms of other villagers.

The outbreak of World War II changed everything. In the first half of 1942, most of local Jews were deported and murdered at Bełżec extermination camp or shot on the spot. From July onwards, “manhunts” were conducted for those who were in hiding and attempting to survive the ongoing extermination campaign by seeking refuge in forests and fields.

They usually built hideouts in thickets and ravines. Joseph Ulma helped one Jewish family construct such a hideout. Jews also sought shelter with the inhabitants of nearby villages. In Markowa, thanks to the assistance of several Polish families, several Jews survived the war.

## Help amidst terror

At the end of 1942 the Ulma family sheltered eight Jews. They were: Saul Goldman, who was a well-known cattle trader in the area before the war, with his sons and young daughter.

Previously, the Goldmans had been in hiding with the assistance of Włodzimierz Leś, a blue policeman of the area (the Blue Police - a municipal Polish police force subordinate to the German Order Police, in German: *Ordnungspolizei*, operating during the Nazi German occupation in the years 1939-1945). The Goldmans left their property with him, but Leś stopped providing support and refused to return their belongings. That’s when they turned to the Ulmas. Eight people lived in the Ulma family’s attic for over a year. The men helped with tanning hides, sawing planks of

wood and chopping wood for fuel. Their work was even photographed just like many other scenes from the family’s daily life. It seemed as if the hellish thought of occupation was far away. But it was just an illusion – death was all around. They all witnessed it multiple times. The windows of the house overlooked what was called the trench, where Jews were executed.

## The crime

Shortly before dawn on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1944, German gendarmes arrived in Markowa, accompanied by the Blue Police. The perpetrators were well-informed. They knew the purpose of their trip to Markowa and whom they were looking for. They found Jews hiding in the attic. Shots rang out. Within a few minutes, all members of the Ulma family: Joseph, his pregnant wife Victoria, their six children, and all the hiding Jews were killed by the hands of the gendarmes. It is alleged maybe, Włodzimierz Leś, fearing the loss of acquired property, had informed on the Ulmas. One of the perpetrators, is reported to have said during the execution, “Look at how the Polish swines die – those





■ Joseph and Victoria Ulma with children

who harbour Jews.” The bodies of the victims were buried by the villagers on the orders of the Germans. After the liberation, a Jewish team removed the bodies of the Jews.

## Commemorating the Ulmas and the hidden Jews

On September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1995, the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem posthumously honoured Joseph (Józef) and his wife Victoria (Wiktoria) Ulma with the title of Righteous Among the Nations. In 2016, a museum bearing their name was opened in Markowa, dedicated to all the Poles who saved Jews during the Holocaust. Since 2018, on the anniversary of the tragic events in Markowa – 24<sup>th</sup> March – the

President of the Republic of Poland, decided it should be a bank holiday, a National Day of Remembrance for Poles Saving Jews under German Occupation.

## Unprecedented beatification of a whole family

On Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2023, Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, presided over the Beatification Mass on the Ulma family in Markowa, a village in southeastern Poland in Przemyśl Archdiocese. Seven Cardinals and 1,000 priests, concelebrated the Mass. Poland’s Chief Rabbi, Michael Schudrich attended. More than 32,000 faithful were in the congregation.

The new Blessed are: Jozef and Wiktoria Ulma, and their children Stanisława, Barbara, Władysław, Franciszek, Antoni, Maria and an unnamed child who was born at the moment of Wiktoria’s martyrdom.

In his homily Cardinal Semeraro said the Ulma’s family home became “an inn where the despised, outcast, and death-stricken were welcomed and cared for. The couple lived a holiness that was not only marital but was fully embedded in their entire family.

Cardinal Semeraro also upheld the Christian witness of the newly-beatified unnamed child: “Without ever having uttered a word,” he said, “today the little Blessed cries out to the modern world to welcome, love and protect life, especially that of the defenceless and marginalized, from the moment of conception until natural death.”

He said the child’s “innocent voice seeks to shake the consciences of a society where abortion, euthanasia and contempt for life, seen as a burden and not a gift, are rampant.”

“We heard the words of Jesus in the conclusion of the parable of the Good Samaritan: ‘Go, and do likewise’ (Luke 10:37). It is known that Joseph and Victoria Ulma paid special attention to the passage from the Gospel of St Luke, underlining the title in red in their family Bible and adding their own writing: ‘Yes.’

Archbishop Adam Szal said “The beatification of the Ulma family is an unprecedented event because it will elevate the entire family to the glory of the altars – parents Joseph and Victoria Ulma along with their seven children. They were martyred for being brave and courageous to hide eight Jewish people under their roof, previously assisting other persecuted Jews simply because of their nationality.”



■ Victoria Ulma with her children. Photo taken by their husband and father Joseph Ulma around 1943.

## Yes to God's will

Cardinal Semeraro said that Joseph and Victoria's gesture was an expression of obedience to God's command. It was a 'yes' to God's will. Their home became the inn where a despised, rejected and mortally wounded person was welcomed and cared for. Thanks to this, he could continue to live. In reality, without nurturing care, humanity fails; care is a crucial part of being human, as it makes existence truly human.

For this act of hospitality and care - in a word, mercy - flowing from genuine faith, the Ulmas, along with their children, paid the highest price of martyrdom: their lives were the precious coin they sealed with the selfless gift of themselves in the name of love.

To fully understand the heroic decision of Joseph and Victoria, we need to look at the spiritual journey they had undergone up to that point. Starting with their characters: Joseph was honest, hardworking and eager to help others; Victoria was warm-hearted, gentle and sensitive to the needs of others. Along with their continual growth in the love of the Lord and neighbour, their engagement with parish activities, and their life in the village of Markowa.

We, too, cannot help but feel the captivating power of their Christian witness, which they passed on to their children.

## Inspiration for us all

This family's courageous and selfless actions during World War II exemplify Christian love and solidarity in the face of great danger, and their story serves as an inspiration to us all.

The newly Blesseds primarily teach us to receive the Word of God and daily strive to fulfil God's will. The Ulmas as a family, listened to this Word of God in the Sunday liturgy and then continued to read; *meditate*; pray; contemplate at home, as seen in their read and underlined Bible. As I mentioned earlier, the handwritten word "yes" next to the parable of the Good Samaritan and the emphasis on the passage where Jesus calls us to love even our enemies (Matthew 5:46) are significant. In this way, the Word of the Lord, heard day by day, shaped their courageous program of life.

## Holiness within a neighbourhood

The sanctifying grace of Baptism, the Eucharist and other sacraments worked perfectly in them, and the beauty and greatness of the sacrament of Marriage shines forth clearly among them. Therefore, they lived in holiness not only as a couple but also as a family.

The Ulma home became a place of 'holiness within the neighbourhood,' as Pope Francis calls it in the apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate* on the call to holiness in the contemporary world when he writes: 'I like to contemplate the holiness present in

the patience of God's people: in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile. In their daily perseverance, I see the holiness of the Church Militant. Very often it is a holiness found in our next-door neighbours, those who, living in our midst, reflect God's presence' [Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 7].

In the witness and martyrdom of the Ulma family and their children, we rediscover the greatness of the family, the place of life, love and fruitfulness. We rediscover the greatness of the mission entrusted by the Creator to married couples.

## Openness especially those in greatest need

Therefore, the Ulma family encourages us to respond to this 'culture of rejection' condemned by Pope Francis when he says; 'We are rejecting hope: the hope of children who bring us life, and the hope of the elderly, rooted in the past and looking to us to continue their journey. (...) It is not a problem of this or that law; it is a problem of rejection' [Francis, *Address during the Plenary Meeting of the Pontifical Academy for Life*, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021].

The witness of Joseph and Victoria Ulma and their children teaches us openness to others, especially those in greatest need.

The reception of the neighbour became an urgent task considering the violence and destruction caused by the war. The ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has lasted for 18 months, has forced a large number of refugees to flee, knocking on Poland's doors in search of safe shelter.



In this difficult time, various government and local institutions, as well as thousands of people from ordinary families, spontaneously opened their doors to receive those who had to flee. The widespread involvement of activists and volunteers in humanitarian efforts has taken on extraordinary proportions and significance.

Unfortunately, similar situations are repeating themselves in other parts of the world, causing hordes of refugees to seek refuge among others. May the intercession of the new Blessed and their evangelical witness of love encourage all people of goodwill to become those who “bring peace” (Matthew 5:9), opening their doors and engaging in helping their neighbour, who arrives with physical and moral suffering, taking on the difficult task of providing assistance and keeping them away from their own homes and loved ones, offering a remedy for the wounds resulting from rejection or misunderstanding. Long before the outbreak of this war, Pope Francis said: ‘Faced with the suffering of so many people, worn out by hunger, violence and injustice, we cannot remain spectators. Ignoring human suffering—what does that mean? It means ignoring God! If I do not approach this man, this woman, this child, this elderly person who are suffering, I do not approach God’ (Francis, General Audience, April 27, 2016).

Agata Pawłowska

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# From Darkness to Divine Encounter

**Read a story of transformation, faith and the incredible power of God's grace.**

**H**ello, I'm Marino Restrepo, and I was invited by the editors of *The Angels* magazine to share with you the incredible journey of how I encountered God and how it transformed my life. It's an honour for me to share this story with you, especially through the ministry of St Michael the Archangel, my favourite angel.

## Serene childhood

Let me begin by taking you back to my roots. I was born in a small Colombian town nestled in the

Andes, where coffee farming was a way of life. I grew up in a loving, Catholic family, the sixth of ten children. Our lives were deeply intertwined with the traditions and teachings of the Catholic faith. It was a beautiful, nurturing environment to grow up in.

However, life has its twists and turns, and my path took an unexpected detour when I was just fourteen. I was sent to Bogota, the capital of Colombia, during the tumultuous 1960s. Little did I know that this move would lead me down a vastly different road.



## My entry into the New Age

Bogota exposed me to a world I had never encountered before. It was a time of counterculture, with the influence of American youth who had fled the Vietnam War. They brought with them the culture of rock and roll, along with the allure of hallucinogenic drugs and Eastern mystical beliefs like Hinduism and Buddhism. This was my entry into the New Age lifestyle, and it led me away from my Catholic upbringing.

## In Europe and America

At the age of twenty, I embarked on a new chapter by moving to Hamburg, Germany. There, I pursued higher education at the University of Hamburg and discovered a passion for acting and music composition. It was also during this time that I became a father to two wonderful sons.

But the story doesn't end there. My journey eventually took me to Los Angeles, California, where I spent over two decades working in the entertainment industry. Little did I know that my life was about to take a profound and unexpected turn, leading me back to my Catholic faith in a way I could never have imagined.

## Walking out of faith

For years, I had walked a path far from God. It was a journey that had taken me away from the faith I had known as a child. The only voice that still spoke to me about God was my dear mother's.

My mom, you see, had always been a pillar of faith in our family. Even during those years when I had strayed far from the Church, she remained

a steadfast believer. She would visit me in California every few years, and without fail, she would gently express her concern. She'd tell me that the life I was leading, the choices I was making, would eventually lead to spiritual consequences. I cherished my mother's wisdom and love, but I couldn't help but think that her religious convictions belonged to a bygone era. So, her advice often fell on deaf ears.

## The turning point

But then, in the year 1997, everything changed. That Christmas season was marked by a profound sadness in our family. In the four years leading up to that Christmas, we had endured a relentless wave of loss. It was a period that tested our faith and resilience like never before.

It began with the heartbreaking loss of my wife, who succumbed to cancer. That was just the beginning. Tragedy struck again when my younger brother met a tragic accident in the Bahamas, leaving us all in shock. Soon after, my father passed away, adding to the weight of our grief. Then, in a devastating turn of events, another brother took his own life in Bogota, leaving us grappling with questions and sorrow. And as if the pain weren't enough, just a few months later, we received the news that my beloved mother had passed away.

That Christmas, there were only a few of us siblings left behind, my four sisters and one brother. They were devout Catholics, firmly rooted in their faith. What they didn't know was that I had drifted far from the practice of our shared religion. The only one who had known about my spiritual distance was my mother, but she had chosen not to burden my siblings with that knowledge.

## The Child Jesus answered my prayers

They extended the invitation, an invitation I couldn't refuse. It was an invitation to partake in an age-old Catholic tradition in Colombia – the Christmas Novena to the Infant Jesus. Despite years of spiritual distance, I found myself accepting their invitation without revealing the true extent of my absence from Catholicism.

As I stepped into the church that day, I carried with me a secret, one that I chose not to disclose to my sisters. It had been thirty-three years since I had set foot inside a Catholic church. Yet, I stood among my family, ready to join them in the Novena. The priest's words resonated through the sanctuary: "When you pray this Novena with faith, the Child Jesus will grant you grace." It was a moment of humble supplication, and I too, silently, sought grace from the Child Jesus.

I must confess, my initial request for a life change was rooted in materialism. The Child Jesus would indeed bring about a profound transformation, albeit in a manner I could never have anticipated.

## Kidnapping

The culmination of the Novena fell on the midnight Mass of December 24<sup>th</sup>, a sacred tradition in our family. As the clock struck midnight and heralded the arrival of Christmas day, I made a decision. I chose to spend that night at a coffee plantation, one that belonged to one of my uncles.

As I approached the ranch gate in my jeep, my heart raced with anticipation. However, my excitement was short-lived. Suddenly, and with startling swiftness, six guerrillas from the





■ Marino Restrepo

FARC Liberation Army emerged from the dense forest. Their faces masked with determination, they brandished menacing machine guns and swiftly seized me, their captive.

I was bound, a hood shrouding my vision, and whisked away into the depths of the jungle. In the heart of this unforgiving terrain, they concealed me in a hidden cave. My journey through the darkness was only beginning, and I would spend the next six months in captivity – a captive both to my captors and to the unfolding mysteries of Divine Providence.

## My execution was sure

The first fifteen days were spent in that suffocating cave, shrouded in uncertainty. Weary and anxious, I awaited the arrival of another group of guerrillas who would determine my fate. It was on the fifteenth day, as they finally arrived, that the full weight of my predicament bore down upon me. Their demands were clear, and they spared no ambiguity.

They demanded a substantial sum of money, and with a cruel twist of fate, they threatened my family's lives should I dare to refuse. It was a chilling ultimatum, one that left me with no choice but to comply. To make matters

worse, they informed me that even after the ransom was paid, my execution was assured. I had been condemned to die. Bound once more, a hood once again covering my head, they declared that the following day would usher in a new chapter of my ordeal.

## Ecstasy amidst chaos

That night, amidst the darkness of captivity and despair, something extraordinary happened. It was a night when Jesus Himself chose to reveal His presence to me. At that moment, I was a broken man, devoid of hope, and I could hardly fathom emerging from the unforgiving clutches of the jungle alive. My family's lives hung in the balance, their safety jeopardized by the ruthless captors who aimed to strip away every last penny I possessed. On this fateful night, I was forty-seven years old, and it seemed as though my life's most treasured possessions were slipping through my fingers.

And then, suddenly, I was engulfed in an experience that would later reveal itself as ecstasy. In that moment, I remained oblivious to the nature of this phenomenon. Instead, I believed I was facing the precipice of death, my consciousness transported to the inner courtyard of my childhood home in my

hometown. Riding a tricycle with three wheels and clutching a stick in my hand, I careened through the garden, indiscriminately toppling plants and flowers. In the midst of my fervent chaos, I could hear my beloved May admonishing me to cease my reckless actions.

## Enlightenment of conscience

Panic surged through me, yet I found myself inexplicably trapped within this ecstasy, reliving fragmented pieces of my own life. It was a night like no other, a night when the boundaries of reality blurred, and the divine intervened in the most unexpected of ways.

As I reflected upon my tenth or eleventh year of life, I could distinctly recall a profound transformation that unfolded within me - a transformation characterised not by physical pain, but by the excruciating pangs of conscience. For over three decades, my conscience had lain dormant, a silent witness to my moral slumber. During this extended period, I had, regrettably, lost the fear of God. However, as abruptly as this fear had departed, it returned to my heart with an overwhelming force, triggering an even more profound agony.

In this moment of awakening, I found myself acutely aware of the gravity of sin - the sense of wrongdoing and its far-reaching consequences. I was confronted by the painful realisation of how deeply I had wounded others, how grievously I had offended God, and how recklessly I had endangered my own soul. With each passing phase of my life, these scenes grew progressively more serious and agonizing, mirroring the accumulating weight of my past transgressions.

This extraordinary process of self-examination and remorse spanned

the entirety of my life's journey, and on that fateful night, when I was forty-seven years old, it reached its zenith. This initial phase, one could aptly term the "enlightenment of conscience," marked the inception of my transformative experience.

## Celestial city

However, the story unfolds further. As I remained in this state of ecstasy, a mystifying dimension of my encounter unfurled. Suddenly, I found myself lying face down upon the verdant grass, nestled upon what felt like the crest of a mighty mountain. The surrounding atmosphere exuded a profound and inexplicable silence, a silence of unparalleled perfection that resonated with a deep sense of awe and reverence.

My gaze shifted toward the horizon, where a second, loftier mountain loomed in the distance. Its summit, concealed beneath a shroud of mist, remained enigmatic, tantalizingly distant. Yet, as the mist slowly dissipated, an awe-inspiring city of radiant light materialised before my eyes, nestled upon the heights of that distant peak. It was a sight of unparalleled splendour, and my soul bore an undeniable awareness that I was destined for that celestial city.

However, a growing sense of trepidation gripped me, for I realized that despite this profound yearning, I could not bridge the chasm that separated the two mountains. I realised I was meant for a destination I could not, by my own efforts, attain.

## I spoke to the Lord

At this point I began to hear the sound of great waters coming towards me. I could hear them, but I

could not see them. And it turned into many voices in perfect harmony. I didn't know if they were singing or praying, but they were priceless and in perfect harmony. After a while they became one voice. And that voice came from everywhere. Even though I had been away from God for many years, the moment I heard that voice, I knew it was the voice of God. And because my conscience was enlightened, I knew what a terrible state of sin my soul was in. So this voice was burning me, I couldn't stand it, I wanted to leave. But the Lord, in His mercy, kept me there and spoke to me at length.

One of the things He said to me, and what I can tell you, is that He spoke about the Church. And He said it in these exact words; *The Catholic Church is my Church. I chose you in your mother's womb and you have forsaken it.* He did not blame me. He was perfect love. But I blamed myself. It was very painful to look at Him.

Then, He spoke about the Catholic faith. He said that Catholics were a chosen and set-apart people - individuals predestined for a sacred purpose. We, the faithful, were described as the Eucharistic instruments of atonement, entrusted with the mission to save all of humanity.

Then, He said about the significance of the priesthood within Catholicism. No earthly force possessed greater power against the forces of evil than the holy priest. He said that a holy priest had the capacity to send tremors through the depths of hell.

## Nourishing sacraments

We Catholics were created to be vessels of the Eucharist. To fulfil this sacred role, it was imperative that we be

nourished by the sacraments. I departed from these life-giving sacraments which led me to spiritual malnourishment, making me vulnerable to the seductive allure of the secular world.

It was during this spiritual malaise, lasting a staggering 33 years, that I succumbed to the temptations of the world, unable to muster the strength to resist. Describing the profound pain of this estrangement from my faith is a challenge, for words cannot adequately convey the depths of sorrow and remorse I felt as I beheld the path I had unwittingly embarked upon - a path that would span a lifetime.

The Lord compared the sacrament of confession to a spiritual exorcism, emphasizing that mortal sin was akin to a malevolent entity - an actual demon, a spirit, a living being. Prolonged persistence in mortal sin, He explained, led to the accumulation of these evil forces, ultimately forming a legion within us. It was only through the Catholic Church, within the sacrament of confession, and through the intercession of the priest, that one could be absolved and liberated from the clutches of these evil spirits.

## Mission of the Catholics

Then, He described the Eucharist as the most extraordinary gift bestowed upon humanity by the Almighty Father. This divine sacrament was hailed as the greatest gift in the world, and Catholics were called upon to recognise themselves as instruments of this sublime offering. The paramount mission of a Catholic, I was told, was intrinsically tied to the Eucharist - a mission of immeasurable significance. The true measure of a person's life in eternity lay in the number of souls they had contributed to saving





through their unwavering devotion to the Eucharist. Each time we receive Holy Communion, God saves souls.

He went on to tell me about priests coming out of the sacristy and putting on liturgical vestments.

He told me about the spiritual battle that begins before Mass when the priest, all dressed up, comes to the altar and kisses it. A great light descends from heaven on the spiritual terrain that covers the altar on which the Mass will be celebrated. And all the devilish activities on that spiritual terrain cease because the demons cannot bear the light and flee. So there is a lot of liberation, salvation and healing during the Mass. And then, He said, that when we assist at Mass and are in a state of grace with God and come to Communion, Eucharistic Jesus uses our Communion to save souls from eternal damnation. The moment we receive Communion, many people in the world die and many risk damnation. The Eucharistic Jesus saves souls every time we receive Communion, which is why He called us Eucharistic instruments of salvation. When we leave Mass, wherever we go, we are like pillars of light and demons flee.

## To fight sins harder

He then reminded me of a quote from St Paul where he says: "Whenever you eat this bread, then, and drink this cup, you are proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore, anyone who eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily is answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone is to examine himself and only then eat of the bread or drink from the cup; because a person who eats and drinks without recognising the body is eating and drinking his own condemnation" (1 Cor 11:26-29), and He told me why it is so important to understand that we must be diligent in preparing to receive Communion.

He went on to tell me about the Ten Commandments and the seven deadly sins. He said that the seven deadly sins are the seven legions of demons that fight the law of the Lord. And He showed me the three cardinal sins that have been strong in my life since I was a boy, and how each of us fights a spiritual battle with a different legion of demons as we go through life. That is why it is important for us to recognise which ones they are. We usually know, but it's good to look more closely at them so that we can fight them harder.

## Encounter with my Guardian Angel

The Lord placed me in a lake, the water reaching up to my waist. Across from the lake stood a sizable rock, upon which I saw a man looking to the side. At first I didn't know who it was. However, when I looked at the water, I noticed a mist hovering above its surface. Upon closer inspection, it became clear that there were the demons

representing my 33 years of deadly sins. They were headed for the abyss, and I could vividly perceive the depths to which my soul had plummeted due to a life marred by sin. It was a profound moment of anguish, and I realised that had I passed away that night, damnation would have awaited.

Yet, amid this profound darkness, I raised my eyes and saw the sole source of light - the figure of the man standing atop the rock. To my astonishment, this figure turned out to be my guardian angel. It was the angel who revealed the visions within the lake, guiding me to witness the lowest regions of purgatory situated on the right side. The angel did not communicate with me in a voice like the Lord but rather directly to my heart; I can't explain how it worked because I don't know, but I understood everything he said.

The angel led me back to my hometown at the age of 11, recalling a moment when I participated in a procession dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Here, I was shown the immense power of the rosary and the profound efficacy of prayer.

I reappeared in the lake and the rock radiated with a brilliant light - the very presence of Jesus. Subsequently, Our Lady appeared on the right side of the rock, and together, both Our Lady and Jesus, saved me from oppressive darkness.

## Genuine freedom

Having returned from the ecstasy I spent another five and a half months as a prisoner in the jungle after Jesus appeared to me. Throughout this ordeal, all I wanted was for the Lord to prevent me from perishing in a state of mortal sin. And after six months, a great miracle happened. The guerrillas

released me without explanation. It was evident that the guerrillas themselves were unaware of the reasons behind this unexpected liberation. I recognised it as a miraculous intervention by the Holy Spirit, that took me out of the jungle captivity.

Subsequently, I sought the sacrament of confession, and it was this act that truly granted me my freedom. I was acutely aware of the presence of those demons from the lake in my life, and I knew that only the sacrament of confession could liberate me. That day, when I confessed my sins and received forgiveness, was undeniably the most significant day of my existence.

I returned to California, spending two years quietly learning how to be a devout Catholic without disclosing my profound encounter with God to anyone. After two years, during Holy Week in Bogotá, the Lord revealed to me a clear mission to share my testimony with everybody.

### My mission

That is why I am telling you all that I have gone through. My life stands as a testament to God's boundless mercy. If God could save me, He can save anyone. I bear witness to His mercy and compassion, and I testify with my life that the Catholic Church is indeed the Church established by the Lord Jesus Himself. As Catholics, we are members of His army.

I also testify to the existence of hell and Satan, the reality of purgatory and heaven. It is within our grasp, as Catholics, to overcome and comprehend how to remain faithful to God, thus conquering the challenges in our lives.

Marino Restrepo, Colombia

# Our hope in the Immaculate Heart of Mary

**The Immaculate Conception is a doctrine that refers to the belief that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was conceived without original sin.**

This doctrine does not refer to the virgin birth of Jesus, but rather to the belief that Mary herself was conceived in her mother's womb without inheriting the original sin that all other humans inherit from Adam and Eve.

The doctrine was officially declared a dogma of the Catholic Church by Pope Pius IX on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1854, through a papal bull called "Ineffabilis Deus". This dogma asserts that Mary was preserved from original sin from the moment of her own conception, through a special divine privilege, in anticipation of her role as the mother of Jesus Christ.

### Through the centuries

The history of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception within the Catholic Church is a complex and evolving one. The belief in Mary's Immaculate Conception has ancient roots, but it took centuries to develop and become an official doctrine of the Church. Here is a brief overview of the history of the dogma.

In the Early Christian era the belief in Mary's special holiness and purity was present in the early Christian community, and various theologians and Church Fathers expressed ideas related to her sinlessness. However, the specific notion of the Immaculate Conception as it is understood today was not fully developed at this time.

In the Medieval Period the idea of Mary's Immaculate Conception continued to develop, with various theologians and thinkers discussing her unique role in salvation history. However, there were differing opinions on the matter, and the Church did not make an official declaration.

In 13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries the debate over the Immaculate Conception intensified. Some theologians argued in favour of Mary's Immaculate Conception, while others had reservations due to concerns about the doctrine's compatibility with certain theological principles. Theologians like St Thomas Aquinas had reservations about the doctrine.

In 18<sup>th</sup> century the debate continued, and devotion to Mary's



immaculate conception grew. Popes Benedict XIV and Pius VI allowed the celebration of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in some regions, but they did not make a definitive statement on the doctrine itself.

## The Miraculous Medal

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception reached a critical point in the 19<sup>th</sup> century thanks to the Miraculous Medal, also known as the Medal of the Immaculate Conception. It originated from a series of visions experienced by St Catherine Labouré, a novice nun.

Let's shed some light to those mysterious events that took place in the Daughters of Charity order in Paris, France in 1830. Catherine Labouré, a young nun, claimed to have had a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the vision, Mary appeared to her standing on a globe, with rays of light emanating from her hands. Catherine saw an oval frame surrounding Mary, inscribed with the words "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee."

In the vision, Mary instructed Catherine to have a medal struck according to the image she saw. The design of the medal includes Mary standing on the globe, with the rays of light coming from her hands. The reverse side of the medal features the letter "M" intertwined with a cross, and below it, the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The Miraculous Medal gained popularity due to the reported miracles and blessings associated with those who wore it with faith. It

became known as the "Miraculous Medal" due to the many stories of healings, conversions and other graces attributed to its intercession.

The Miraculous Medal remains a popular and cherished devotional item. Many believers wear it as a visible sign of their trust in Mary's intercession and as a reminder of her role as a loving and compassionate mother to all Christians.



■ Proclamation of Mary Immaculate, artist unknown, 19<sup>th</sup> cent.

The symbolism on the medal reflects important aspects of Catholic theology. Mary's standing on the globe represents her role as the Queen of Heaven and Earth. The rays of light symbolize the graces that Mary dispenses to those who ask for her intercession. The "M" and cross on the reverse side represent Mary's connection to the salvation brought by Jesus, with her heart united to his.

## The papal bull

Now let's come back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In February 1832, a cholera epidemic broke out in Paris, causing thousands of deaths. In June, the sisters distributed the first 2,000 medals. Healings multiplied, as did conversions and testimonies of special care. They were innumerable. The people of Paris call the Medal "Miraculous".

In the autumn of 1834, more than 500,000 medals were already distributed throughout the world. In 1839, the medal was distributed in more than ten million copies. Devotion to Mary's purity and holiness continued to spread, and many Catholics believed in the doctrine. In response to petitions from bishops and the faithful, Pope Pius IX, in 1854, proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception through the papal bull "Ineffabilis Deus". This bull formally declared that Mary was conceived without original sin.

The proclamation of the dogma was met with widespread joy among Catholics who had long held this belief. It also reaffirmed the unique role of Mary in salvation history and emphasized her holiness as a model for the faithful.

It's important to note that the development of this dogma was a gradual process influenced by theological reflection, devotion and the guidance of the Church's magisterium (teaching authority). The Immaculate Conception is now a central Marian dogma within the Catholic Church and its celebration on December 8<sup>th</sup> each year serves as a reminder of Mary's special place in Christian theology and devotion.

Angela Taylor, U.K.



# St Michael comes to London

On Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2023, thousands of pro-lifers gathered in London for the annual UK March for Life.

Despite a national rail strike the numbers weren't down at this year's March for Life. Police estimated that 7,000 pro-life attendees of all ages, including a large contingent of youth, filled Parliament Square, London on the Saturday to show their support for the 2023 theme of the event 'Freedom to Live'.

March for Life takes place in central London every year when thousands of pro-life men and women from across the nation unite in the heart of Westminster on behalf of the unborn.

## Each human life matters

SPUC staff and supporters joined them, representing the UK's oldest and largest pro-life organisation, which also had a stall at the Emmanuel Centre, where the day's activities commenced simultaneously with the Holy Mass at Westminster Cathedral at 10:30 a.m.

Pro-lifers then marched peacefully through Westminster with banners and signs in a cheerful yet resolute atmosphere.

Several clergymen also attended including Rev. Calvin Robinson and Catholic Bishop John Sherrington. Speaking to the thousands of pro-lifers outside Parliament was Isabel Vaughan-Spruce.

Louise Grant, SPUC's Youth Development Coordinator, who attended the event, said: "To see so many young people at this year's March for Life, including at the stalls in the Emmanuel Centre, was truly motivating. I was able to chat with those who visited the SPUC stall and was delighted to hear that many young people are keen to join us at our next SPUC Youth Conference. Louise added "It's easy for many people to feel isolated in their pro-life beliefs, but March for Life proves that we are not alone. It encourages us to continue to stand up and be counted."



## St Michael, defender of the unborn

The commanding and majestic presence of St Michael the Archangel was a sight to behold being carried past Parliament Square. The statue currently on a tour of Scotland visiting almost 70 churches since May 2022. The Archangel travelled by bus from Glasgow to London under the great care of Mary Teresa Doogan, the St Michael Pilgrim Statue Scottish Tour Coordinator and Grace McBride for this special day to champion the cause.

*"For You created my inmost being, You knit me together in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well"* (Psalm 139:13-14).

St Michael the Archangel defender of life, we call on you and your legions of angels to guard and protect the dignity of unborn life in the womb. Watch over all expectant mothers and shield the child they carry. Amen.

Noreen Bavister, U.K.



■ Grace McBride (L) Mary Doogan (R), the St Michael Pilgrim Statue Scottish Tour Coordinator



# Litany to the Holy Guardian Angel

Lord, have mercy on us.  
 Christ, have mercy on us.  
 Lord, have mercy on us.  
 Jesus, hear us.  
 Jesus, graciously hear us.  
 God the Father of heaven,  
 Have mercy on us.  
 God the Son, Redeemer of the world,  
 Have mercy on us.  
 God the Holy Spirit,  
 Have mercy on us.  
 Holy Trinity, One God,  
 Have mercy on us.

Holy Mary, Queen of Angels,  
 pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, who art my  
 guardian, pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, whom I revere  
 as my superior, pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, who dost give me  
 charitable counsel, pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, who dost give me  
 wise direction, pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, who dost take  
 the place of a tutor, pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, who dost love me  
 tenderly, pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, who art my  
 consoler, pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, who art attached  
 to me as a good brother,  
 pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, who dost instruct  
 me in the duties and truth  
 of salvation, pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, who art to me a  
 charitable shepherd, pray for me.

Angel of heaven who art witness  
 of all my actions, pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, who dost help me  
 in all my undertakings,  
 pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, who dost  
 continually watch over me,  
 pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, who dost  
 intercede for me, pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, who dost carry  
 me in thy hand, pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, who dost direct  
 me in all my ways, pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, who dost defend  
 me with zeal, pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, who dost conduct  
 me with wisdom, pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, who dost guard  
 me from all danger, pray for me.  
 Angel of heaven, who dost dissipate  
 the darkness and enlighten  
 the mind, pray for me.

Lamb of God, Who takes away  
 the sins of the world,  
 Spare us, O Lord.  
 Lamb of God, Who takes away  
 the sins of the world,  
 Graciously hear us, O Lord.  
 Lamb of God, Who takes away  
 the sins of the world,  
 Have mercy on us, O Lord.  
 Jesus, hear us.  
 Jesus, graciously hear us.  
 Pray for us, O Guardian Angel,  
 That we may be made worthy  
 of the promises of Christ.



■ Guardian Angel by Felix Castello

Let us pray:

Almighty and eternal God, Who by an effect of Thine ineffable bounty hast given to each of the faithful an angel to be the guardian of body and soul, grant that I may have for him whom Thou hast given me in Thy mercy so much respect and love, that, protected by the gifts of Thy graces and by his help, I may merit to go to Thee in heaven, there to contemplate Thee with him and the other happy spirits in the brightness of Thy glory. Amen.

Taken from:

[www.catholictradition.org](http://www.catholictradition.org)

# Memories to treasure forever



**Our group were privileged to have Fr Peter Prusakiewicz CSMA lead a recent Divine Mercy pilgrimage in Poland.**

**F**r Antun Pasalic from Ireland was warmly welcomed by Fr Peter and the pilgrims. Helping and assisting in co-celebrating daily Mass, leading the Rosary and the Divine Mercy chaplet on our bus to the holy shrines throughout the week between 4<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

I arrived exhausted after a 19-hour trip back to Texas but spiritually recharged with many graces yet to unfold. Apart from the rich experiences at the shrines, the beautiful souls from the USA, Australia, Mexico, Nigeria,

England, Scotland and Ireland that shared the pilgrimage, were very much a part of my new memories that I shall treasure forever.

There were no words to adequately describe the gift that the pilgrimage was to me. The miracles that have and continue to unfold that are truly the work of God's mercy.

I have been on many pilgrimages but this one to Poland and my last one to the Holy Land right before the lockdowns were the most enriching. Fr Peter's Eucharistic Healing Hours and his homilies were healing and powerful. Some pilgrims expressed that it was the best week of their lives - helping them to develop spiritually and become closer to God.

I know graces from these experiences are never meant to be kept private and St Faustina and our Merciful Jesus will bring people to us that will benefit from what the Divine Mercy offers us in these very challenging times for both the Church and the world.

Fr Peter was an incomparable guide; the depth of his knowledge of St Faustina, the Divine Mercy, St Michael, Our Lady at Jasna Gora were so spiritually enriching and being at the places that were the sources of these tremendous gifts to the world was truly phenomenal.



We went to the orphanage in Czestochowa to truly see 'Love and Mercy in Action' with the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy taking care of the babies and orphans with learning disabilities.

And then there was Fr Peter's humour, hymns and songs that delighted the tired pilgrims on the bus and bonded us.

My sister and I returned home with peace and joy in our hearts and a huge respect for our spiritual director.

**Patsy Gonzales**, Austin, Texas, USA

**15-22 July 2024. 15<sup>th</sup> Divine Mercy Pilgrimage to Poland led by Fr Peter.**

For further details contact:

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Email: [holyangelsinfo@gmail.com](mailto:holyangelsinfo@gmail.com)



■ Sister Maria Vianneya



## USA 2023

### 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> December 2023

**Theme: Spirituality  
of St Faustina and her  
encounters with the Angels**

**St Clares Retreat Centre,**  
2381 Laurel Glen Road,  
975073 Soquel, California  
Contact: Sr. Vincent  
Phone: +1(831)-423-8093  
Email: stclaresretreatcenter@gmail.com

### 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023

**Parish Bicentennial Celebration**

**Theme: Looking forward  
to Christmas with  
the Blessed Mother,  
St Faustina and the Angels**

**St Francis Solano Parish**  
Sonoma, California  
Archdiocese of Santa Rosa  
Contact: Father Rowell, parochial vicar  
Email: pastorstfrancissolano@gmail.com

### 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023

**Theme: Advent Mission  
with St Faustina and the Angels**

**Ascension RC Church,**  
802 Pine Street, Bastrop,  
Texas, 78602  
Contact: Fr. Luis Cáceres  
Phone: +1(512)-321-3552

### 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> December 2023

**Theme: Advent and Christmas  
with St Faustina  
Divine Mercy Parish mission**

**St Thérèse Church**  
Alhambra, CA 91801  
Contact: Fr Thomas OCD  
Phone: +1(626)-282-2744  
Email: thomasofthetrinity@gmail.com

## PHILIPPINES 2024

### 3<sup>rd</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> February 2024

**Theme: Divine Mercy  
and St Michael the Archangel**

Contact: Anton Gonzalez  
Phone: +63-917-812-1228  
Email: antonsgonzalez@gmail.com

## AUSTRALIA 2024

### Sydney Mission

#### 13<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024

**Holy Mass with homily  
by Fr Prusakiewicz CSMA  
Holy Hour with Eucharistic  
healing service**

**Blessing of Divine Mercy image**

**Holy Spirit Parish** – North Ryde, Sydney  
**St Michael's Parish** – Hurstville, Sydney  
**Our Lady Parish** – Horsley Park, Sydney  
**St Kevin Parish** – Eastwood, Sydney  
Phone: +61-298-882-569  
Phone: +61-407-937-615  
Email: parish@holyspiritnorthryde.org.au  
www.stmichael.com

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA 2024

### 19<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Contact: Fr Brogdan Swierczewski CSMA  
Email: csmahqbs@gmail.com

## USA 2024

### 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> April 2024

**Divine Mercy Weekend**

**St Margaret Mary Church**  
1101 W New Hope Drive,  
Cedar Park, Texas 78613  
Contact: Claudia Eshelman  
Email: claudia@stmargaretmary.com

### 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> April 2024

**DAY 1 The power and love  
of St Michael the Archangel  
DAY 2 Angels, Divine Mercy  
and St Faustina**

**St John Vianney RC Church**  
3201 Sunrise Road  
Round Rock, Texas 78665  
Contact: Deacon Rudy Villareal  
Email: dcnrudy@sjvroundrock.org  
Phone: +1 (512)-218-1183

### 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024

**Parish Mission**

**DAY 1 The Angels, Our Blessed  
Mother and Devotion  
to the Blessed Sacrament  
DAY 2 Spiritual Warfare under  
the leadership of St Michael**

**St Daniel Catholic Church**  
3004 Court Street, Syracuse,  
New York 13208  
Fr Thomas Ward Parish Priest  
Contact: Carol Puschaver  
Email: stmichael597@gmail.com  
Phone: +1(315)-409-7088

### 18<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2024

**Theme: Divine Mercy  
and St Michael the Archangel  
Houston**

### 7<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024

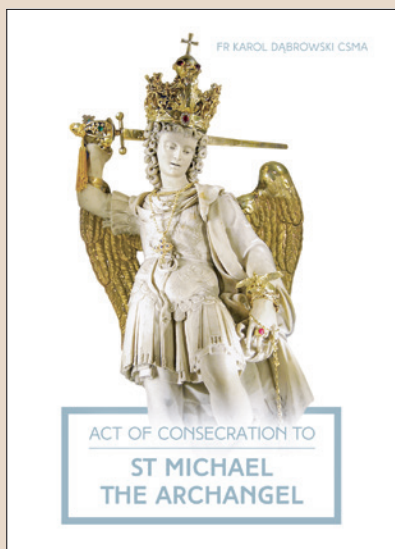
**St Louis Mission**  
Contact: Romona Rosales

### 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> May 2024

**25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary St Louis  
Marian Conference  
Theme: Divine Mercy  
and St Michael the Archangel**  
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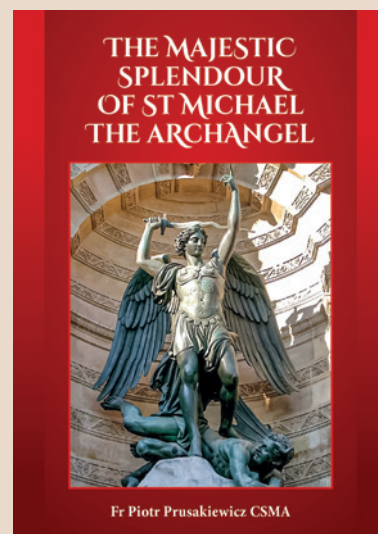
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Fr Peter Prusakiewicz CSMA



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# Chaplet of St Michael

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

A. *Amen*

*Say the following prayer on the medal:*

*O God, come to my assistance.*

*O Lord, make haste to help me.*

*Glory be to the Father, etc.*

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

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

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

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

*(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)*

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

*(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)*

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

*(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)*

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

*(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)*

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

*(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)*

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

*(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)*

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

*(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)*



■ The 13<sup>th</sup>-century icon of St Michael from Archangel Cathedral in Yaroslavl

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.