

Archetypal Archangel and Archer

Actions, Apparitions and Angelic Assignments of Saint Michael

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St. Michael, the Archangel, was assigned duties by God and, thus, the performance of those duties sometimes resulted in appearances and interventions on Earth *as he did in Heaven*.

“You should be aware that the word ‘angel’ denotes a function rather than a nature. Those holy spirits of heaven have indeed always been spirits. They can only be called angels when they deliver some message. Moreover, those who deliver messages of lesser importance are called angels; and those who proclaim messages of supreme importance are called archangels. “

“Whenever some act of wondrous power must be performed, Michael is sent, so that his action and his name may make it clear that no one can do what God does by his superior power. “

-- from a homily by Pope Saint Gregory the Great

Original and Primary Apparition - AD 8 May 492 OS (21 May NS) Monte Gargano, Italy

In the Holy Bible, God was pleased to make frequent use of the ministry of the heavenly spirits in the dispensations of “His providence in this world”. The Angels were all pure spirits; by a property of their nature they were immortal, as are all spirits. They had the power of moving or conveying themselves at will from place to place, and such was their activity that it was not easy for common folk to conceive of it. Among the holy Archangels, Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael were particularly distinguished in the Scriptures. Saint Michael, whose name means *Who is like unto God?*, was the prince of the faithful Angels who opposed Satan and his followers in their revolt against God. Since the devil is the sworn enemy of the Holy Church, Saint Michael was assigned by God as its special protector against the demon’s assaults and stratagems.

Various apparitions of this powerful Angel have proven the protection of Saint Michael over the Church. Some followers may mention his apparition in Rome, where Saint Gregory the Great saw him in the air sheathing his sword. This appeared to signal the cessation of a pestilence and the appeasement of God’s wrath. Another apparition occurred to Saint Ausbert, bishop of Avranches in France, which led to the construction of Mont-Saint-Michel in the sea, a famous pilgrimage site. On May 8, however, most scholars recall another no less marvelous apparition, occurring near Monte Gargano in the Kingdom of Naples.

In the year 492, a man named Gargan was pasturing his large herds in the countryside. One day a bull fled to the mountain, where at first it could not be found. When its refuge in a cave was discovered, an arrow was shot into the cave, but the arrow returned to wound the one who had sent it. Faced with so mysterious an occurrence, the persons concerned decided to consult the bishop of the region. He ordered three days of fasting and prayers. After three days, the Archangel Saint Michael appeared to the bishop and declared that the cavern where the bull had taken refuge was under his protection, and that God wanted it to be consecrated under his name and in honor of all the Holy Angels.

Accompanied by his clergy and people, the pontiff went to that cavern, which he found already disposed in the form of a church. The divine mysteries were celebrated there, and there arose in this same place a

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magnificent temple where the divine Power has wrought great miracles. To "...thank God's adorable goodness for the protection of the holy Archangel, the effect of His merciful Providence", this feast day was instituted by the Church in his honor.

It is said of this special guardian and protector of the Church that, during the final persecution of Antichrist, he will powerfully defend it: "At that time shall Michael rise up, the great prince who protects the children of thy people." (*Dan.* 12:1) Compare this text with Chapter 10 of the *Apocalypse* of Saint John.

Reflection. Saint Michael is not only the protector of the Church, but of every faithful soul. By humility he defeated the devil; we who are enlisted in the same warfare must adopt his weapons — humility and ardent love of God. Regarding this Archangel as our leader under God, let us courageously resist the devil in all his assaults with our protector's famous exclamation: "Who is like unto God?"

It would have been natural to St. Michael, the champion of the Jewish people, to be the champion also of Christians, giving victory in war to his clients. The early Christians, however, regarded some of the martyrs as their military patrons: St. George, St. Theodore, St. Demetrius, St. Sergius, St. Procopius, St. Mercurius, etc.; but to St. Michael they gave the care of their sick. At the place where he was first venerated, in Phrygia, his prestige as angelic healer obscured his interposition in military affairs. It was from early times the centre of the true cult of the holy angels, particularly of St. Michael. Tradition relates that St. Michael in the earliest ages caused a medicinal spring to spout at Chairotopa near Colossae, where all the sick who bathed there, invoking the Blessed Trinity and St. Michael, were cured.

Still more famous are the springs which St. Michael is said to have drawn from the rock at Colossae (Chonae, the present Khonas, on the Lycus). The pagans directed a stream against the sanctuary of St. Michael to destroy it, but the archangel split the rock by lightning to give a new bed to the stream, and sanctified forever the waters which came from the gorge. The Greeks claim that this apparition took place about the middle of the first century and celebrate a feast in commemoration of it on 6 September (*Analecta Bolland.*, VIII, 285-328). Also at Pythia in Bithynia and elsewhere in Asia the hot springs were dedicated to St. Michael.

At Constantinople likewise, St. Michael was the great heavenly physician. His principal sanctuary, the Michaelion, was at Sosthenion, some fifty miles south of Constantinople; there the archangel is said to have appeared to the Emperor Constantine. The sick slept in this church at night to wait for a manifestation of St. Michael; his feast was kept there 9 June. Another famous church was within the walls of the city, at the thermal baths of the Emperor Arcadius; there the synaxis of the archangel was celebrated 8 November. This feast spread over the entire Greek Church, and the Syrian, Armenian, and Coptic Churches adopted it also; it is now the principal feast of St. Michael in the Orient. It may have originated in Phrygia, but its station at Constantinople was the Thermae of Arcadius (Martinow, "Annus Graecoslavicus", 8 Nov.). Other feasts of St. Michael at Constantinople were: 27 October, in the "Promotu" church; 18 June, in the Church of St. Julian at the Forum; and 10 December, at Athaea.

The Christians of Egypt placed their life-giving river, the Nile, under the protection of St. Michael; they adopted the Greek feast and kept it 12 November; on the twelfth of every month they celebrate a special commemoration of the archangel, but 12 June, when the river commences to rise, they keep as a holiday of obligation the feast of St. Michael "for the rising of the Nile", *euche eis ten symmetron anabasin ton potamion hydaton*.

At Rome the Leonine Sacramentary (sixth century) has the "Natale Basilicae Angeli via Salaria", 30 September; of the five Masses for the feast three mention St. Michael. The Gelasian Sacramentary (seventh

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century) gives the feast "S. Michaelis Archangeli", and the Gregorian Sacramentary (eighth century), "Dedicatio Basilionis S. Angeli Michaelis", 29 Sept. A manuscript also here adds "via Salaria" (Ebner, "Miss. Rom. Iter Italicum", 127). This church of the Via Salaria was six miles to the north of the city; in the ninth century it was called *Basilica Archangeli in Septimo* (Armellini, "Chiese di Roma", p. 85). It disappeared a thousand years ago. At Rome also the part of heavenly physician was given to St. Michael. According to an (apocryphal?) legend of the tenth century he appeared over the Moles Hadriani (Castel di S. Angelo), in 950, during the procession which St. Gregory held against the pestilence, putting an end to the plague. Boniface IV (608-15) built on the Moles Hadriani in honour of him, a church, which was styled *St. Michaelis inter nubes (in summitate circi)*.

Well known is the apparition of St. Michael (a. 494 or 530-40), as related in the Roman Breviary, 8 May, at his renowned sanctuary on Monte Gargano, where his original glory as patron in war was restored to him. To his intercession the Lombards of Sipontum (Manfredonia) attributed their victory over the Greek Neapolitans, 8 May, 663. In commemoration of this victory the church of Sipontum instituted a special feast in honour of the archangel, on 8 May, which has spread over the entire Latin Church and is now called (since the time of Pius V) "Apparitio S. Michaelis", although it originally did not commemorate the apparition, but the victory.

In Normandy St. Michael is the patron of mariners in his famous sanctuary at Mont-Saint-Michel in the Diocese of Coutances. He is said to have appeared there, in 708, to St. Aubert, Bishop of Avranches. In Normandy his feast "S. Michaelis in periculo maris" or "in Monte Tumba" was universally celebrated on 18 Oct., the anniversary of the dedication of the first church, 16 Oct., 710; the feast is now confined to the Diocese of Coutances. In Germany, after its evangelization, St. Michael replaced for the Christians the pagan god Wotan, to whom many mountains were sacred, hence the numerous mountain chapels of St. Michael all over Germany.

The hymns of the Roman Office are said to have been composed by St. Rabanus Maurus of Fulda (d. 856). In art St. Michael is represented as an angelic warrior, fully armed with helmet, sword, and shield (often the shield bears the Latin inscription: *Quis ut Deus*), standing over the dragon, whom he sometimes pierces with a lance. He also holds a pair of scales in which he weighs the souls of the departed (cf. Rock, "The Church of Our Fathers", III, 160), or the book of life, to show that he takes part in the judgment. His feast (29 September) in the Middle Ages was celebrated as a holy day of obligation, but along with several other feasts it was gradually abolished since the eighteenth century (see FEASTS). Michaelmas Day, in England and other countries, is one of the regular quarter-days for settling rents and accounts; but it is no longer remarkable for the hospitality with which it was formerly celebrated. Stubble-geese being esteemed in perfection about this time, most families had one dressed on Michaelmas Day. In some parishes (Isle of Skye) they had a procession on this day and baked a cake, called St. Michael's bannock.

In the 'liturgical books of 1962' St. Michael's feast had been eradicated. The day is a IV class feria. However, perusing the web it appears many '62ist sites ignore its non existence and keep the feast anyway - the 'make it up as you go' principle at work no doubt.

Patronage: against temptations; ambulance drivers; artists; bakers; bankers; banking; Basesy, Samar, Philippines; battle; boatmen; Brecht, Belgium; Brussels, Belgium; Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico; Caltanissett, Sicily; diocese of Coimbatore, India; Congregation of Saint Michael the Archangel; coopers; Cornwall, England; danger at sea; Dormagen, Germany; Dunakeszi, Hungary; dying people; emergency medical technicians; EMTs; England; fencing; Germany; Greek Air Force; greengrocers; grocers; haberdashers; hatmakers; hatters; holy death; diocese of Iligan, Philippines; knights; mariners; milleners; archdiocese of Mobile, Alabama; Naranjito, Puerto Rico; Papua, New Guinea; paramedics; paratroopers; diocese of

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Pensacola-Tallahassee, Florida; police officers; Puebla, Mexico; radiologists; radiotherapists; sailors; diocese of San Angelo, Texas; San Miguel de Allende, Mexico; archdiocese of Seattle, Washington; security forces; security guards; Sibenik, Croatia; sick people; Siegburg Abbey; soldiers; Spanish police officers; diocese of Springfield, Massachusetts; storms at sea; swordsmiths; Umbria, Italy; watermen; Zeitz, Germany

Duties and Titles

In the liturgy of the Mass Saint Michael is regarded as the Angel who leads the souls of the faithful departed to heaven: *"Deliver them from the lion's mouth, that hell engulf them not, that they fall not into darkness; but let Michael, the holy standard-bearer, bring them into the holy light."*

The following table contains many of St. Michael's titles and duties based, in part, from the "Litany of Saint Michael, the Archangel" and other sources.

<i>St. Michael, right hand of God</i>	<i>St. Michael, light of Angels</i>
<i>St. Michael, general of God's Armies</i>	<i>St. Michael, bulwark of orthodox believers</i>
<i>St. Michael, first captain of God's hosts</i>	<i>St. Michael, honour and joy of the Church Triumphant</i>
<i>St. Michael, sword of God</i>	<i>St. Michael, light and confidence of Souls at the hour of death</i>
<i>St. Michael, most powerful Prince of the armies of the Lord</i>	<i>St. Michael, chief officer of paradise</i>
<i>St. Michael, Prince of all the heavenly court</i>	<i>St. Michael, our help in all adversities</i>
<i>St. Michael, filled with the wisdom of God</i>	<i>St. Michael, herald of the everlasting sentence</i>
<i>St. Michael, perfect adorer of the Incarnate Word</i>	<i>St. Michael, consoler of Souls detained in the flames of Purgatory</i>
<i>St. Michael, crowned with honour and glory</i>	<i>St. Michael, whom the Lord has charged to receive Souls after death</i>
<i>St. Michael, vanquisher of evil spirits</i>	<i>St. Michael, our most glorious and warlike Prince</i>
<i>St. Michael, standard-bearer of the most Holy Trinity</i>	<i>St. Michael, strength of those who fight under the standard of the Cross</i>
<i>St. Michael, guardian of Paradise</i>	<i>St. Michael, the admirable general</i>
<i>St. Michael, guide and comforter of the people of Israel</i>	<i>St. Michael, splendour and fortress of the Church Militant</i>

Days of the Saint

His feast, originally combined with the remembrance of all angels, had been celebrated in Rome from the early centuries on September 29. The Synod of Mainz (813) introduced it into all the countries of the Carolingian Empire and prescribed its celebration as a public holiday. All through medieval times Saint Michael's Day was kept as a great religious feast (in France even up to the last century) and one of the annual holiday seasons as well. The churches of the Greek Rite keep the feast on November 8, and a second festival on September 6. In France the apparition of the Archangel at Mont-Saint-Michel is commemorated on October 16. Another apparition, on Mount Gargano in Apulia, Italy, is honored by a memorial feast in the whole Western Church on May 8.

Apparitions

Asia Minor, First Century A.D.

Michael's original reputation was as champion and protector of the Jewish people and the Church at the time of the Apostles. However, early Christians also regarded him as a healer of the sick. He was given the title "Angel of Healing" in the middle of the first century when he caused a medicinal spring to spout at Chairotopa in the land of Phrygia, now a part of Turkey. Tradition relates that all the sick who bathed in that spring, invoking the Blessed Trinity and St. Michael, were cured.

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Even more famous are the springs which Michael is said to have drawn from the rock at Colossae, not far from Chairotopa. The pagans directed a stream against the sanctuary of St. Michael to destroy it, but the archangel split the rock by lightning to give a new bed to the stream, and sanctified forever the waters that flow through that gorge. The Greeks instituted a feast (September 6) in commemoration of this event.

Constantinople, 337 A.D.

At Constantinople Michael was considered both a heavenly physician and a military protector. The Emperor Constantine the Great attributed his brilliant victory over the pagan Emperor Maxentius to the assistance of Saint Michael, and in gratitude built a magnificent church in Sosthenion, some 50 miles south of Constantinople. He dedicated it to the archangel and called it the Michaelion. In 337 Michael appeared to Constantine at this sanctuary, saying: "I am Michael, the chief of the angelic legions of the Lord of hosts, the protector of the Christian religion, who whilst thou wast battling against godless tyrants, placed the weapons in thy hands." The Michaelion became the scene of many miracles and a place of pilgrimage. Many sick and infirm were cured in it. The sick often slept in this church at night waiting for a manifestation of the archangel.

Monte Gargano, Italy, 493 A.D.

Italy has an endless list of interesting places to visit due to its Faith, history, beautiful countryside and the Italians love of art. One such place in Monte Sant' Angelo only a forty minute drive from San Giovanni Rotondo.

The town of Monte Sant' Angelo was built on a spur 850 meters above sea level which overlooks both Gargano Massif and the sea. Dominated by the ruins of Norman Castle it has kept its ancestral customs and its ancient appearance with whitewashed houses squeezed together onto rapidly sloping mountainside. The surrounding land is all rock and could easily be mistaken for the West of Ireland.

Interest in this lovely spot is due to the apparitions of St. Michael The Archangel. The Prince of the Heavenly Hosts was prefigured in the Old Testament: Michael in Hebrew means "one who is like God." There was devotion to him in the Eastern Church but not in the Western Church until after these Apparitions took place; it is from here that St. Michael became known throughout Europe and the new world.

The last (of four) apparitions of St. Michael was in answer to prayer as the terrible plague of 1656 had hit the area. The local bishop with his people invoked the Archangel and the plague ceased. It was at this time that the use of stone chips from the cave began to be used by the faithful much as medals or scapulars are used today. This custom is carried on even now by the local people who take small stones and place them around their homes and in the fields.

Rome, 600 A.D.

During a plague which greatly depopulated the city of Rome, Pope Gregory I (Gregory the Great) ordered a penitential procession in which he himself carried a statue of the Blessed Virgin. As the procession reached the bridge across the Tiber, the singing of angels was heard. Suddenly Gregory saw an apparition of a gigantic archangel, Michael, descending upon the mausoleum of Emperor Hadrian. In his right hand, Michael held a sword, which he thrust into its scabard. Gregory took the vision as an omen that the plague would stop, which it did, and so he renamed the mausoleum the Castel Sant' Angelo (Castle of the Holy Angel) in Michael's honor.

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Rome, 663 A.D.

The Lombards of Sipontum (Manfredonia, near Puglia, province of Foggia) attributed their victory over the Greek Neapolitans, 8 May, 663. In commemoration of this victory the church of Sipontum instituted a special feast in honour of the archangel, on 8 May, which has spread over the entire Latin Church and is now called (since the time of Pius V) "Apparitio S. Michaelis", although it originally did not commemorate the apparition, but the victory.

Avranches, France, 708 A.D.

In France, Saint Michael is the patron of mariners. His statue atop Mont Saint-Michel on the Normandy coast is visible far out to sea. In the year 708 the archangel is said to have appeared to St. Aubert, bishop of Avranches, three times in the bishop's dreams. Each time he commanded Aubert to erect a monastery on a rocky outcrop that rose from the sea a mile off the beach. Aubert obeyed: the site was named Mont-Saint-Michel and the famous sanctuary was built there.

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Prayers

“FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE CHURCH”

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle;
be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares
of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray
and do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host
by the power of God, cast into hell
satan and all the evil spirits who prowl through the world
seeking the ruin of souls. Amen -- *Composed by Pope Leo XIII AD 2 March 1810 NS – AD 20 July 1903 NS*

Glorious Saint Michael, guardian and defender of the Church of Jesus Christ, come to the assistance of His followers, against whom the powers of hell are unchained. Guard with special care our Holy Father, the Pope, and our bishops, priests, all our religious and lay people, and especially the children.

Saint Michael, watch over us during life, defend us against the assaults of the demon, and assist us especially at the hour of death. Help us achieve the happiness of beholding God face to face for all eternity. Amen.

Saint Michael, intercede for me with God in all my necessities, especially *{mention special petition}*. Obtain for me a favorable outcome in the matter I recommend to you. Mighty prince of the heavenly host, and victor over rebellious spirits, remember me for I am weak and sinful and so prone to pride and ambition. Be for me, I pray, my powerful aid in temptation and difficulty, and above all do not forsake me in my last struggle with the powers of evil. Amen.

Glorious Saint Michael, Prince of the heavenly hosts, who stands always ready to give assistance to the people of God; who fought with the dragon, the old serpent, and cast him out of heaven, and now valiantly defends the Church of God that the gates of hell may never prevail against her, I earnestly entreat you to assist me also, in the painful and dangerous conflict which I sustain against the same formidable foe. Be with me, O mighty Prince! that I may courageously fight and vanquish that proud spirit, whom you, by the Divine Power, gloriously overthrew, and whom our powerful King, Jesus Christ, has, in our nature, completely overcome; so having triumphed over the enemy of my salvation, I may with you and the holy angels, praise the clemency of God who, having refused mercy to the rebellious angels after their fall, has granted repentance and forgiveness to fallen man. Amen.

Most glorious Prince of the Heavenly armies, Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in our battle against principalities and powers, against the rulers of this world of darkness, against the spirit of wickedness in the high places. Come to the assistance of men whom God has created to His likeness and whom He has redeemed at a great price from the tyranny of the devil. The Holy Church venerates thee as her guardian and protector; to thee the Lord has entrusted the souls of the redeemed to be led into Heaven. Pray therefore the God of Peace to crush Satan beneath our feet, that he may no longer retain men captive and do injury to the Church. Offer our prayers to the most High, that without delay they may draw His mercy down upon us. Take hold of the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, bind him, and cast him into the bottomless pit so that he should no more seduce the nations. Amen.

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“FOR SUPPORT OF THE POLICE”

Saint Michael, heaven's glorious commissioner of police, who once so neatly and successfully cleared God's premises of all its undesirables, look with kindly and professional eyes on your earthly force.

Give us cool heads, stout hearts, and uncanny flair for investigation and wise judgment.

Make us the terror of burglars, the friend of children and law-abiding citizens, kind to strangers, polite to bores, strict with law-breakers and impervious to temptations.

You know, Saint Michael, from your own experiences with the devil, that the police officer's lot on earth is not always a happy one; but your sense of duty that so pleased God, your hard knocks that so surprised the devil, and your angelic self-control give us inspiration.

And when we lay down our nightsticks, enroll us in your heavenly force, where we will be as proud to guard the throne of God as we have been to guard the city of all the people. Amen.

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