



SAINT MICHAEL, THE ANGEL OF RELIGION

Posted on October 1, 2023 by Father Paul Roy



The new esoteric fashions that are springing up to fill the void left by the retreat of Christianity and the forgetfulness of the sacred, feature angels who supposedly connect us to invisible energies. Far removed from such figures, and far from maintaining our tendency towards egocentricity, the Archangel looks upwards, and invites us to do the same. Saint Michael teaches us to rediscover our sense of God. Abbé Paul Roy introduces us to this Archangel, whom we can only invoke more fully if we know him better.

After the centuries of Enlightenment, rationalism, scientism and faith in progress, our era marks a return to the sacred. Alas, the eclipse of the religious has not come to an end—rather than returning to the faith of the ancients, people remain radically modern, willing to do anything but acknowledge themselves as heirs, and prefer to build their own spirituality. Consciously or unconsciously, most are joining the ranks of what used to be known as the New Age, and what some today refer to as magical thinking. Esotericism is on everyone's lips, attracting many souls clumsily in search of God.

Angels, spiritual beings halfway between man and heaven, are making a strong comeback in the contemporary imagination. A quick search on the Internet, however, leaves us wondering about the contemporary conception of angelic spirits: angels—in particular the "72 guardian angels"—seem to have become a means of connecting to energies and to an invisible world in which we are bathed without being aware of it, of developing our capacity for empathy and personal creativity.

This is reminiscent of the emanatist doctrine of the Platonists, who saw man as a quasi-divine being fallen to earth and enclosed in matter, separated from the original One by a ladder of intermediate beings, to be traversed in an upward direction, by illumination, to return to fundamental harmony. Thus conceived, angels are no longer ministers or auxiliaries of God, but obstacles in man's relationship with the true God. Like the esoteric doctrines that flourish everywhere today, they lead our contemporaries down blind allies, distracting them from the profound religious quest for the true light that leads to a profound change of life.

A Powerful Defender

We have come a long way from the true nature of angels, and the figure of their prince, Michael. Far from keeping us in the egocentric attitude that characterizes modern religiosity, the archangel looks upwards, and invites us to do the same. Mi-ka-El, in Hebrew: "who is like God." His name is a program. Saint Michael is an effective intermediary, a powerful defender of the human race, but a messenger

who steps aside, so that man can once again be directed towards his Creator. The archangel thus appears on mountain tops—theophanic places par excellence in the Old Testament—to remind us that his role is none other than that of a hyphen, a signpost.

From Mont Gargan to Mont Tombe, now Mont-Saint-Michel, the sanctuaries where the Prince of Angels is venerated are invitations to contemplation of celestial things. The Prince of Angels is named in the Old Testament as the one who fights for the people of Israel (Dan 10:13), the "one of the chief princes." In the Epistle of Jude (Jude 9), he is mysteriously designated as the one who disputed with the Devil over the body of Moses, who expired on Mount Nebo, in sight of the Promised Land, without anyone ever finding his remains. In the Book of Revelation (Rev 12:7), he leads the angels to fight the dragon—despite the latter's counterattack, he has the upper hand, and from heaven, hurls Satan down to earth.

Saint Michael's role in the history of the Church does not end there—soon the object of popular veneration in the East (the Copts dedicated up to seven liturgical feasts to him), then in the West (with a few excesses that the authorities were obliged to curb, as witnessed by certain letters of Saint Augustine), he appeared at Mont Gargan in the 5th century; then at the beginning of the 8th to Bishop Aubert of Avranches, to whom he gave an indication, by means of a strong pressure of his finger on his skull (the relic preserved in the church of Saint-Gervais d'Avances still bears witness to this), to build a sanctuary at the summit of Mont Tombe, an isolated rock in the middle of the large sandy bay bordering his diocese.

Centuries later, Christian peoples' veneration for the Prince of Angels has not waned, and God allowed him to continue to intervene visibly on their behalf. When France found itself in distress, he was the messenger sent to Jehanne, the Pucelle of Domrémy, soon to be the liberator of Orléans. To prepare the children of Fatima for the apparitions of Our Lady, the angel appeared to them three times, taught them to pray and mysteriously gave them Holy Communion. St. Michael's close relationship with the Eucharist is still visible in the rites of the Mass, where the angel is invoked on numerous occasions—in the Confiteor, in the blessing of incense at the offertory in the traditional Mass, and even in the Roman Canon (implicitly in the Supplication prayer), where the holy offering is even asked to be carried by him to the heavenly altar. On the Last Day, Saint Michael will again be our intercessor, as well as taking part in the judgment (1 Thess 4:16), as he is often depicted holding the scales that weigh our souls by the weight of their charity.

Saint Michael thus has a dual function, which is an important teaching for our spiritual life: tradition identifies him among the seven angels who stand continually before the face of the Lord (To 12, 15), and his very name is a praise of God's infinite glory; but the archangel also presents to Him the prayers of pious men (as Raphael presented the prayers and religious acts of old Tobias, cf. To 12, 12), and he willingly serves as a messenger and intercessor.

As a divine sign, Saint Michael shows us that there is no creature too high or distant to condescend to support our misery, since God Himself became man in Jesus. An angelic model, he teaches us to keep our eyes raised to heaven, full of gratitude and admiration for the Divine Majesty, proclaiming with him: "Who is like God?" In a world so far removed from religion and yet so versed in spiritualities, could St. Michael, duly presented and venerated, serve as a bridge to bring our contemporaries back to the unity of truth and faith?

Father Paul Roy is a priest of the Fraternity of Saint-Pierre, and moderator of the site and training application [Claves](#). This interview comes through the kind courtesy of [La Nef](#).

[Featured](#): *Saint Michael*, by Guariento di Arpo; painted ca. 1350.
