

Meditations: September 29, the Holy Archangels

Some reflections that can assist our prayer on the feast of Saints Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, Archangels.

- Saint Michael and the power of God
- The messages of Saint Gabriel
- Saint Raphael, a cheerful young man

THE ARCHANGEL Saint Michael is presented in the Old Testament as the one who, on God's behalf,

defends the Chosen People from danger. In the New Testament, in the book of Revelation, we are told of his war against the forces of evil: *Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven* (Rev 12:7-8). One of the first consequences of Christ's victory is the defeat of the devil. And this archangel is the one entrusted with carrying this out. "Michael means: 'Who is like God?' Hence," Saint Gregory the Great writes, "when a mission requires special power, Michael is sent, implying by his actions and his name that no one can do what only God can do."^[1]

Entrusting a mission to Saint Michael is the same as saying that only God can do it: "Saint Michael wins because it is God who acts in him."^[2]

Saint Josemaría told a group of his children: “None of you is alone, none of you is an isolated verse: we are verses in the same epic, divine poem.”^[3] We all form part of the body of Christ, which is the Church. Today we can ask this archangel, prince of the heavenly hosts, to watch over all men and women, to defend us in battle and protect us from the snares of the devil.^[4] And we can do so with the certainty of victory, *for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God (Rev 12:10)*. Intensifying our relationship with Saint Michael will increase our faith in God’s power and make us more humble. And it will help us to identify ourselves ever more fully with his own name: *All my bones will exclaim: Who is like You, O Lord? (Ps 35:10)*.

THE CATECHISM of the Catholic Church teaches that “with their whole being the angels are servants and messengers of God.”^[5] Their entire being is dedicated to serving. The angels exist in order to joyfully cooperate with God and transmit his designs to men. And among all these messengers, Gabriel stands out. His name means “God is my strength.” We see him being sent as God’s ambassador on several occasions to communicate the divine plan of salvation and to encourage those being invited to carry it out. *I am Gabriel*, the angel says to Zechariah, *who stand in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news (Lk 1:19)*. In the Old Testament, the archangel Gabriel brought a message to the prophet Daniel: *he came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. He came and he said to me, “O Daniel, I have now come to give*

you wisdom and understanding” (Dan 9:21-22).

Saint Luke recounts that when the Virgin Mary was startled to hear the archangel’s greeting, she was told: *Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God (Lk 1:31).*

Gabriel attains from God the consoling words needed to confront difficult situations in a serene and hopeful way – also when what he is communicating seems to exceed our own capacities, as at the moment of the Annunciation. He reminds us that *with God nothing will be impossible (Lk 1:37)*, and he can always help us greatly in our struggles. “It looks as if the whole world is coming down on top of you,” Saint Josemaría wrote. “Whichever way you turn you find no way out. This time, it is impossible to overcome the difficulties. But, have you again forgotten that God is your Father? — all-powerful, infinitely

wise, full of mercy. He would never send you anything that is evil. That thing that is worrying you, it's good for you, even though those earthbound eyes of yours may not be able to see it now.”^[6] The Archangel Gabriel announces God's will and helps us understand that it can only lead to joy and peace.

TOBIT and his wife were worried about sending their young son Tobias alone on a hazardous journey to a distant city. Then a cheerful young man suddenly appeared (cf. *Tob* 5:10), ready to accompany him: *I will go with you; I am familiar with the way* (*Tob* 5:6). It was the archangel Saint Raphael. He accompanied young Tobias, teaching him to learn from the challenges they confronted on the way (cf. *Tob* 6:1-9). Saint Raphael encouraged him to

overcome the fears that prevented him from embarking on the adventure of marriage with Sarah (cf. *Tob* 6:16.18). He taught Tobias to love his future wife (cf. *Tob* 6:19), and helped him to be the joy of his parents (cf. *Tob* 11:9-15).

Because of the help that the Archangel Saint Raphael provided to Tobias, Saint Josemaría entrusted the apostolic work with young people to him. He viewed this part of Opus Dei's apostolate as the "apple of his eye," since the Christian formation of young people is a priority in the Church and in the Work. Future generations will also be eager to receive the same gift that has brought us such great peace. All Christians are called to carry out this mission, in order to be sowers of the joy of the Gospel. We are invited to help many young people so that "they may be, now and for the rest of their lives, Christian leaven in

families, jobs, and the whole of the immense field of human life in the middle of the world.”^[7]

“We are not alone on our journey or in the trials of life. We are accompanied and supported by the Angels of God, who offer, so to speak, their wings to help us overcome so many dangers, in order to fly high compared to those realities that can weigh down our lives or drag us down.”^[8] The three archangels will accompany us throughout our lives until the end of our journey. And then, in heaven, we will be able to contemplate the face of our Lady, Queen of Angels.

^[1] Saint Gregory the Great, *Homilies on the Gospels*, 2, 34, 9.

^[2] Francis, Audience, 5 July 2013.

^[3] Saint Josemaría, Meditation, 12 March 1961.

^[4] Cf. Prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel.

^[5] Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 329.

^[6] Saint Josemaría, *The Way of the Cross*, Ninth Station, no. 4.

^[7] Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral Letter, 8 June 2018.

^[8] Francis, Audience, 5 July 2013.

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