***Michaelmas: Is There a REAL Saint Michael?***

Often times, those engaged in historical research are able to reach accurate conclusions regarding accretions, the integrity of the event, and historicity. That’s the good news. The bad news is, that in reporting all of that can also result in deleting practices that were legitimate and helpful. For example, during a “declassification of the saints” — Saint Christopher was removed. This was an unpopular move since many people had some very nice jewelry and badges and, gosh, had even named their sons “Christopher.” This led one friend decades ago when the “declassification and suppression” occurred to tell people that he was the priest at Mr. Christopher’s! No matter what your perspective may be, isn’t it a good thing to pray for people when they travel? Do we suddenly drop all prayers that were shaped to be in relationship to St. Christopher and simply say to those boarding an airplane, “Have a nice flight”? Or do we send off our 16-year-old drivers with the words, “You have no idea how happy you have made our insurance agent - drive safely.” Where is God in all of this? And, so St. Christopher is dropped and prayers for safe travels eventually “hit the dust!”

Now we come to Saint Michael the Archangel. He poses a problem for “sola scriptura” people because there he is in the Bible. War has broken out in Heaven. In the end, the point is that St. Michael presents to us the reality of spiritual warfare, and as “Bible believin’ Christians” we must deal with the implications of Biblical words, phrases, teachings, and parables devoted to sin, evil, spiritual warfare and also heavenly images of what “worship” in Heaven is like. (Sorry to some - it’s the “Last Supper” not the “Last Sermon” so there’s no preaching in Heaven - just Solemn High Mass.)

But do we simply want to make St. Michael a prisoner of the Bible, a prisoner of a stained-glass window, or a prisoner of a carved representation or Ikon? I hope not. So, whether a minority of Christians worldwide care not to talk about saints, the majority of worldwide Christians do, and St. Michael (and All Angels) are at least remembered every year by man on September 29. There are even those in other parts of the English-speaking world who call their academic years or events “Michaelmas” just as they also say “Christmas.” Although I prefer other ways of stating these two feasts, I am indebted to people who insisted on noting that the feast is punctuated and defined with a Mass. It’s a bit like the song “The Twelve Days of Christmas” - even though it can be tedious it may be the only thing that reminds people that December 25 begins the Feast rather than culminating with wrapping paper strewn everywhere and Christmas trees placed at the curb.

As a young Anglo Catholic, I recall after Low Mass, reciting with the priests what is often called the “Leonine Devotions” — named after the Bishop of Rome. Imbedded in those devotions is the Prayer of St. Michael - and guess what - it addresses evil. Apart from the historical explanation for its inclusion after Low Mass, there is the reality that some people apparently figured out that there can be sin abounding when greeting people at the door after Mass, in the parking lot and at Coffee Hour. (Just when you were feeling really happy about being at Mass and receiving the Blessed Sacrament, Mr./Mrs. Jones says…! This, by the way is not called “The Last Gospel” in spite of how important Mr. or Mrs. Jones may think their insights are!

And so, we go out into a sinful world, and sinful but forgiven, Christians who are carrying within themselves the Presence of Christ. But rumor has it that by bedtime Sunday night there has often been a day of chaos and problems, and simply leaving after the Dismissal at Mass does not guarantee a Lord’s Day being filled with joy. As the saying goes, \_ \_ \_ \_ happens! That is “Life Happens.” Jesus really wants us to understand how much He loves us, and for many Christians there seems to be two extremes in discussing Evil: “There is no Devil, no evil, and no demons” versus, “The demons are directly fighting Jesus and there are demons all around us.” Some people forget that the issue for demons is angels! Traditionally we have had a very developed understanding of angels, to such an extent that at the Altar before the Sanctus, we know that there are too many created orders in Heaven to name so we use the shortcut: Therefore, with Angels and Archangels and with all the COMPANY of Heaven... Two Thousand years of Christian life, jump started by God’s Word means that our entire history as Christians has dealt with good versus evil. Although there is so much to be said about this, the reality is that we need St. Michael. The Prayer of St. Michael to which I have alluded is an important prayer because it addresses evil. I am reluctant to write it out since some people believe that the official Language of Heaven is Latin, Greek or Elizabethan English, so I leave the task of finding the prayer to you.

That leaves us with what to do in the midst of evil and spiritual warfare. Always proclaim the Holy Name of Jesus. Always rebuke the Devil (Get thee behind me Satan) and always call for the Angels and Archangels. Remember that the word “angel” simply means “messenger” and you and I know Whose message they bring. Now let’s look at ourselves. What kind of a messenger am I? Do I share messages given by God? Have I elevated my messages to the status of “God’s word” and have I prayed sufficiently before I have acted or spoken? What do I need to do to be a better messenger? No one should convey messages as a Christian unless he or she have been willing to submit themselves to God’s Holy Word and participated in His Holy Sacraments, including Confession. Otherwise, we short change those to whom we have given a message.

And while we’re at it - let’s look at the name of the Archangel. Of late I have heard people using shortcuts for their churches, (CST) etc. which I find to be very distracting since it sometimes means eliminating the Lord’s name. Or, calling a church “Peter and Andrew.” Is that a fish restaurant? The same is true for St. Michael: **“Who is like EL?” That is, who is like (unto) God!”** Mentioned three times in the Book of Daniel, the Epistle of Jude and The Revelation of Saint John the Divine, I think he deserves better that “Mike” or “St. Mike.” After all, when nicknaming him we eliminate the “God” part “El.” There are those who justify “Xmas” as utilizing the “X - chi” as the first letter in “Christos” but why miss out on a chance to acknowledge who St. Michael serves, and why miss out on a chance to acknowledge a Saint, and why miss out on a chance to use the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah? Not unusual - even good people conforming to the culture.

**HSMAAD!**

**Happy Saint Michael and All Angels Day!!!**