

FEAST OF THE HOLY ARCHANGELS

REV. JAVIER DEL CASTILLO

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. My Lord and my God, I firmly believe that you are here, that you see me, that you hear me. I adore you with profound reverence; I beg your pardon for my sins, and the grace to make this time of prayer fruitful. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Archangels. And in a little while, on October 2, in a few days, we will celebrate the Feast of the Holy Guardian Angels. In the first reading, or one of the options of the first reading of today's Mass, we read these words from the Book of Revelation: "And there was a battle in Heaven; Michael and his angels battled with the dragon. And the dragon fought in his angels, and they did not prevail; neither was their place found any more in Heaven. And that great dragon was cast down, the ancient serpent, he who is called the devil and Satan, who leads astray the whole world."

Here in today's first reading, we see how St. Michael the Archangel, is- has a task in Heaven. And how he is the prince of- of Heaven, expelling the demon out. And today- originally it was the Feast of Saint Michael only. However, after the liturgical reform, the Church decided to also celebrate the Feasts of St. Gabriel and St. Raphael today. And the work of the Archangels is really one of service to God, adoring God, being messengers of God, and helping mankind reach its ultimate end of going back to God.

Those we could say are the functions of the angels, and the Archangels have a specific and, we could say, *special* purpose in the history of salvation, which are mentioned in the Bible. And that's why they're called Archangels, because of the importance that they- of the message that they carry for mankind, or the task that they have been given. And here specifically, we see Michael, having the task of expelling Satan out of Heaven, expelling the demon, casting him out, purifying as it were, Heaven from the impurity of the- the disobedience of the devil, because he did not want to serve God. He chose himself rather than God.

And today, we have to somehow thank the angels for this great service, and the great services that they have provided in the history of salvation, and also in our own personal history, in our own personal story as we go back to God. This passage from the apocalypse is, is not necessarily referring to some specific moment. As we know, it could be referring to many moments in the history of salvation, or it could be referring to something that has not happened yet.

But it could also be referring to something that happens all the time. And that's St. Michael expelling the devil, from where he trips men and women up. And that is in our own soul. We can ask St. Michael today, right now, to expel the demon from anywhere near us, so that we are not tempted to disobey God, the temptation of pride, the temptation of envy, the temptation of not serving and being self-serving.

How many times in Scripture we see how the Angels serve, how the angels are humble and- and do not want glory and want to give all the glory to God. And we see that with Jesus in the New Testament all over. How they come and announce, for instance- St. Gabriel, whose name means "the fortitude, the strength of

God,” he comes to announce the Incarnation. And at the birth of Our Lord, there are many angels that announce the birth of Our Lord by singing the hymn which we sing in mass, the Gloria: “Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace to people of goodwill.”

We see how they help Jesus in you know- after He's tempted in- in the desert, how they come to serve Him. We see how an angel appears to him and serves him to console him before his Passion. We see how angels at the tomb announce to the women, the- the great news, the evangelization, really the first evangelization is done by angels. The good news is brought to- of the Resurrection is brought to the women by angels who are sitting at the tomb where Jesus was. And in the Acts of the Apostles, we see how the apostles are helped out by angels, and how an angel, for instance, strikes Herod, you know, because of his pride, and he- his life is taken away because he accepted the worship that is due only to God.

Or how the angels free the- the apostles from prison. And we can even see, as St. Josemaria pointed out, the great devotion that the early Christians had to the guardian angels, when, after being released from prison, Peter knocks on the door of the house of a Christian and, and they- they couldn't believe it. They said, “it must be his angel, because it can't be him! He's in jail.” And they realized no, it was actually him. You know, that's how- that's how real angels were to the early Christians and that's- they haven't become less real. It's just that we have to become more aware of their presence and really solicit their help a lot more.

St. Raphael, the- the other Archangel that we celebrate today is- his name means “the medicine of God.” And this is so because he healed not only the eyes of Tobit that had been, you know, struck blind by the- the droppings of a bird as he was in his garden, which is an unfortunate event. If you've ever had that happen to you, maybe not in your eyes, but on your clothes or on your head or something like that, it's definitely unfortunate, but he had- he got these droppings- fell on his eyes, and he was struck blind.

As comic as it may seem, that's what happened. And he couldn't see, and he tried all sorts of- of medicines and doctors and whatever and couldn't- couldn't recover his eyesight until Raphael came and helped him to recover his eyesight with the oil of a fish that he had caught with Tobias.

But more than just curing his, you know, Tobit's eyes, he sees- Raphael is the one that heals, as Pope Benedict said in one of his homilies on the Archangels, he heals the love in that family, he heals the love that exists in marriage, in Tobias' marriage, for instance. It really is a beautiful service that the Archangels provide for us. On October 6, 1932, as a matter of fact, St. Josemaria felt the need to invoke the Archangels in a specific way from then onwards. And he felt the need to invoke them in- in very specific apostolic endeavors that he was to undertake as part of the mission that God wanted of him which was the founding of Opus Dei.

On October 6, he writes these words in his personal diary: “Today, in the chapel of St. John of the Cross,” this chapel is where St. John of the Cross is buried and that's where St. Josemaria spent many a time praying, and in this case, he was making a retreat there in- near Segovia outside of Madrid, about an hour north of Madrid in today- by today's standard. He says, “Today, in the chapel of St. John of the Cross, I spend some periods of accompanied solitude there each day”- I like the idea of accompanied solitude; you know, pray about that.

He says, “I saw that when beginning the priests' meetings and all other meetings having to do with the work of God, with Opus Dei, we should say the following prayers.” Number one, “*veni sancti spiritus*,” which is the “Come, Holy Ghost.” Number two, “*sancte Michael, ora pro nobis; sancte Gabriel, ora pro nobis; sancte Raphael,*

ora pro nobis. That is, “St. Michael, pray for us; St. Gabriel, pray for us; St. Raphael, pray for us. And then number three, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, amen. And number four, “Holy Mary, Seat of Wisdom, pray for us.”

And then he writes later on, “In 1941, I spent long periods of prayer in the chapel where the remains of St. John of the Cross are kept. And there in that chapel, I saw for the first time inwardly moved to invoke the three Archangels and three Apostles, whose intercession we members of Opus Dei ask for in our prayers. From that moment, they were taken as the patrons of three works that make up Opus Dei.”

Well, what are those three works? Those three works are the work of St. Michael, which is dedicated, or St. Josemaria dedicated, or he entrusted St. Michael, with the apostolate carried out by and with celibate members of Opus Dei, people who have given up the possibility of marriage, and embraced apostolic celibacy so that they can be really available for God to give formation to members of Opus Dei, who then can influence in a very deep way, their own milieu.

And for that, he saw the need to have celibate members so that they can- they can go anywhere, he could ask them to go anywhere in the world. And, and that task of giving formation and being really well-prepared and studying a lot, he entrusted that to St. Michael. We wonder why, but you know, it's not totally unbecoming of St. Michael to actually do this because St. Michael is the one who expelled the devil from Heaven, and the devil is the father of lies. The devil is the one who does not accept the truth.

And somehow the work of St. Michael in expelling the devil has a lot to do with expelling the demon of ignorance, in teaching people the truth, the truth about God, the truth about themselves, the truth about what they ought to do in order to come back to God. You know, St. Josemaria, he certainly had a lot of devotion to all the angels, his guardian angel, and what he even called his *ministerial Archangel*, which he began to pray to, as soon as he got ordained, because he read a Father of the Church, who- who claimed to, you know- that all priests had a ministerial Archangel.

And St. Josemaria had a lot of devotion to that second angel, so to speak, that he kind of was *sure* God gave him because he had so much devotion to him. But you know, and we can see in the life of St. Josemaria, how the angels did many, many, many, many favors. Even material favors like fixing his clock, for instance, when he didn't have any money to buy a clock and he needed to get up in order to serve the poor and the sick. He entrusted himself to the guardian angels and his guardian angel fixed his clock. I mean, it was just- or woke him up at the right time and things like that.

That, you know, angels perform these miracles in order to bring people to their ultimate end, to salvation. But he said more than those miracles, more than the miracles that- that are *extraordinary*, I mean, St. Josemaria experienced extraordinary things, but he was not into, you know, all these extraordinary things. You know, if they came, they came, but he was really into the *ordinary*, into the *hidden* miracles, that- that would be performed with the help of angels in the apostolate. They're *interior* miracles that happen in souls.

And he said to his children, but particularly those who would be giving formation, he says, “Our Lord continues to work such miracles,” like the expelling of the devil in the gospels, and you know, wherever they come out in Scripture, he says, “but now, through your hands, now- now, through our hands.” Now, that's very interesting. “People who before couldn't see, and now they do. People who couldn't speak because they

had a dumb devil. And now they can speak with divine grace and the witness of your life; and your doctrine; and your words, both prudent and imprudent. You bring them to God, and they come to life.”

I think these words are very, very interesting, because he focuses on how this work of St. Michael is really the work of bringing people to the truth, and expelling these demons that- that we all have, these *dragons* that we all have, or we all could have. And it is unfortunate when people do have them, you know, deeply rooted within, because they cannot speak, they cannot speak the truth, maybe they can't go to Confession, they have a hard time going to Confession, but when we prepare someone to go to Confession, you know, and we help them to do an examination of conscience, that's not us. We're not doing that. It's really the Holy Spirit who's working through us, you know, if we have that- if we make ourselves available, you know, without humiliating the person that we're helping.

That's the work of St. Michael right there. You know, bringing people to the truth, expelling that dumb, that *mute* devil, so to speak. Also, the- you know, we help people to see, *you* will help people to see things that- truths that are not obvious to them. I mean, we see it in so many- so many people in our society, how they don't see how, you know, these- these obvious truths of natural law, are to be embraced, you know, for instance, the right to life, from beginning to end. I mean, people- people don't see that. People are blind to that.

But if we pray, if we pray to the guardian angels, pray to St. Michael, people will see- people will begin to see, and that will be a miracle. We will help people recover their eyesight through the work of the angels. We are the children of God. We're not angels, but we participate in that mission of expelling evil; purifying the world from falsehood, from ignorance, from envy, from, you know, this laziness to serve God, this sadness that is caused by- by our selfishness.

Look at the work of St. Gabriel. St. Josemaria entrusted the- the apostolates and the formation of adult Christians, adult baptized members of the Church, to- to St. Gabriel, you know, and who are these people? They are- mostly they're married people. They've got children, they- they've got a profession. They're ordinary people who are in the world, but not of the world.

And St. Gabriel, which means “the fortitude of God” really is- it is very appropriate for him to help adult Christians who are married and have families and have work and, you know, they- they're in the world, because *we all need*, especially people who are in the world, we all need the fortitude of God to be witnesses of God there where we are, perhaps where the clergy cannot reach, perhaps where the bishops cannot, you know, go to, perhaps where the religious cannot, you know, it wouldn't be the right place for them to be, but the laity is there, they're all there.

And that's where they need to be strong, they need to bear witness of God. And they need to announce the mysteries of God to their friends, who may not practice their faith or who may not even be Catholic or who may never even have heard of God. They have to be like Saint Gabriel, announcing the mysteries of God to Mary, and really not only announcing it, but announcing it with their actions, because they incarnate the Word of God themselves.

They *incarnate* the message of Jesus, just like Mary *incarnated* the Word of God and it became flesh and it *looked* like her you know, he, Jesus *looks* like Mary in his physical face- in his physical features. She *looks* like him in his interior- in her interior features. But on the outside, he looks like her.

Well, the same thing will happen if in the- this work that St. Josemaria is talking about, the work of St. Gabriel, people put into practice the Word of God, the Gospel, you know, what Pope Francis is talking about really *living* charity with all, reaching out to the peripheries, reaching out to people that- that would never even come close to the threshold of a Church. It's those people that need a reaching out. That's what St. Gabriel is there for, he goes out to you know, he crosses the *chasm* between God and man.

And when he goes back to God, he- he has built a bridge because the Word became flesh, you know, and how God is somehow part of our own nature, our own world. That's what we got to do with people who are far away from God, we have to build a bridge with them, build a bridge, you know, and especially that's done through our charity. And through our, as St. Josemaria says in this quote that I read, "our prudent and imprudent announcements of the Word of God." "Prudent and imprudent," you know. Very interesting task that we all have to pray for, and we all have to engage in: the work of St. Gabriel. And we pray for that right now. We entrust St. Gabriel with this ourselves, and we pray to Our Lord, for the fruits of this vast work.

But then there's this beautiful work, which is the work of St. Raphael. St. Raphael is the- the Archangel to whom St. Josemaria entrusted the work, or education, formation of young people, of young people. *So many young people are lost* because someone gets to them with the wrong influence first. And St. Josemaria saw that young people, if they're going to be, if they're going to be soldiers of Christ, if they're going to be fathers of families, for the future, that they need to be given the truths, the wherewithal, the virtues, while they're young. Not when they're old, while they're young, so that they can actually bear witness to the gospel later on in life.

And this work really is- it's a beautiful work because- because young people are so full of hope. They make mistakes, but it doesn't matter. We all make mistakes. They make mistakes, they fall, but they get up again with great hope, with great spirit, with- with a great *athletic* mindset, you know, that, "Hey, if at first you don't succeed, try, try again." And you see that with young people. And- and it really, when- when you work with them, when you teach them, when you- when you deal with them, you sense their open-mindedness, they're- they're like sponges that absorb everything that is given to them.

And if you give them the truth, what great act of charity you are doing- you and I are doing, what great act of charity. And St. Raphael is very important for young people because he is "*the medicine of God.*" That's what his name means, "The medicine of God." He heals young people. He heals their love. He heals their passions. He heals their- their lack of experience, you know, with the gifts of the Holy Spirit that they receive. And they can surprise us sometimes, you know, "from the mouth of babes," you know, Our Lord says. Really, you- you get many things, you get many truths when, when they are holy, when they try to live a holy life, and when they embrace ideals that inspire others to follow them. This is- this is a very- a very important work in our society.

Well, one of the things that happens with St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael, and presumably the other four Archangels that stand in the presence of God, as we read from- from the Bible, whose names we don't necessarily know, perhaps in the apocryphal, some apocryphal texts, we have some names of them, but we don't know for sure what their names are. But it doesn't matter. They all have a particular characteristic, all their names have a particular characteristic, which is that they contain the name of God, "EL," "E-L," you know, which in Hebrew means "God."

And this *inscription* of God in their own name really means that God is in their *very nature* and at the *core* of who they are, which is very similar to what- what we are because we, all human beings, men and women, are created in the *image and likeness of God*. We somehow too have that “EL” within us, you know, that “E-L” within us. And when- when St. Gabriel, it's interesting, when he announces the great news to Mary, he says, “*The Lord be with you.*” He says, “The Lord be with you!” And in Liturgy, we answer, “And with your spirit,” you know, but he greeted her that way, because *he had God. He had God*, so he could *give God* to us, he could give God to Mary. And the same thing will happen to us. When we have God, *we will give him to people around us*. This is the task of our apostolate.

And that's why St. Josemaria entrusted these works, these- these apostolic endeavors to the Archangels, St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael. We too, can give God to people- to the people around us. And we can expect miracles, because it won't be *we* who are doing anything, it'll be the Holy Spirit working through us. And that's what makes this work beautiful, that we ourselves participate in the history of salvation. Let us thank God for that privilege.

And let us invoke the guardian angels and the Archangels and all angels, all spirits, all pure spirits, that stand in the presence of God and adore him and are there to serve mankind, leading them to their ultimate end. Our Lady, Queen of Angels, will- will help us to carry on our great apostolate of purifying the world, from evil, from Satan, from ignorance, and giving them, showering them with truth just as she did when she incarnated the Son of God.

I thank you, my God, for the good resolutions, affections, and inspirations which you have communicated to me in this meditation. I ask your help to put them into effect. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.



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