

Tuesday September 29<sup>th</sup>, The Feast of the Archangels, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael.

Good Morning from St. Bernadette's.

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well, and following all the guidance we receive to overcome these strange times, and continuing to pray for all our needs at this time.

How are you all this rather lovely morning? Yesterday we started reading the Book of Job, and had today not been a Feast we would have heard Job's Lamentation at the sorry state he now finds himself in, yet still faithful to God. But instead of that, as you can see, today we have a lovely Feast, that of the Archangels, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. Today is really a feast celebrating the care of God for us. He is always looking after us.

St. Michael's name means 'one who is like God' and he is venerated as captain of the heavenly army, victor over Satan, protector of the Church and helper of sick and dying. St. Gabriel, whose name means 'strength of God' announced both the birth of St. John the Baptist to Zechariah, and that of Jesus Christ to Mary at the Annunciation, and also to the Shepherds. His angelic salutation 'Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee' opens one of our most popular prayers. And St. Raphael, whose name means 'God heals' took care of Tobias (the biblical figure, not the presbytery cat) on his journey as described in the book of Tobit. He is patron Saint of the blind, travellers, and physicians and nurses.

The readings for today are all very mystical and wondrous, although, rather strangely, only one uses a passage of Scripture which actually refers to a guardian angel by name, the passage from Revelation. In Daniel 7:9-10.13-14 we have the second part of Daniel's great vision. The four beasts who emerged from the earth and were pushed back represented the pagan gods which surrounded the Chosen People. Out of all the chaos would come the one of great age, the saviour, whose empire would never be destroyed. In the great vision of John in the Book of Revelation 12:7-12 the power of evil, as represented by the dragon and his angels, was beaten back and driven out of heaven. This was done through the power of the sacrifice of Christ. In the Gospel of John 1:47-51 Nathanael is described as one without guile. Our destiny is that we too can '*see heaven laid open and, above the Son of Man, the angels of God ascending and descending*'.

This is a beautiful prayer to the Archangels that highlights the role each Archangel has been given by God and how that role can help us when we need them the most.

*Heavenly King, You have given us archangels  
to assist us during our pilgrimage on earth.*

*Saint Michael is our protector;  
I ask him to come to my aid,  
fight for all my loved ones,  
and protect us from danger.  
Saint Gabriel is a messenger of the Good News;  
I ask him to help me  
clearly hear Your voice  
and to teach me the truth.  
Saint Raphael is the healing angel;  
I ask him to take my need for healing  
and that of everyone I know,  
lift it up to Your throne of grace  
and deliver back to us the gift of recovery.  
Help us, O Lord,  
to realize more fully the reality of the archangels  
and their desire to serve us.  
Holy angels,  
pray for us.  
Amen.*

So let us sing the great hymn ‘Hail redeemer King Divine’ with its great chorus ‘Angels, Saints and Nations Sing.’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yMV7737SdiY>

In the Book of Tobit, Raphael refers to himself as ‘one of the seven angels who stand and serve before the Glory of the Lord.’ Does this mean there are seven archangels? Probably! Do we know the names of the other four archangels? Perhaps, traditions that have their origins in apocryphal writings and have been passed down through the years hold that their names are: Uriel, Raguel, Sariel and Jerahmeel. The veneration of ‘St. Uriel’ is still practiced by some Anglican and Orthodox Christians, and strangely enough he was also picked up by some ‘New Age’ religions. Does that mean we can ask for their intercession? No, Pope Zachary put a stop to that in 745 A.D. when he restricted the use of names for angels to just the names mentioned in the Bible, Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. So there you go.

As you’ll have noticed there have many more trips to the Crematorium sadly over the past few months, though far fewer requiems or services in Church for all the present obvious reasons. There is no official policy for music regarding funeral services from the Church, and it’s kind of up to each priest. I have a policy of only religious or organ instrumental in Church, but at the Crematorium

people can choose what they want, making the service very personalized. It makes for some interesting choices, from TV themes to 'The Bingo Song', believe me, I've heard everything. I sometimes think that Westlife and Boyzone have actually done an album specifically for the Crematorium, with songs about Fathers, Mothers, Brothers and Sisters (I always stand up at the change of key). Ed Sheeran's 'Supermarket Flowers' is getting quite a lot of airings at the moment. And of course 'My Way' is compulsory at least once a day. But one song which is rather lovely, which you may know, and is perhaps appropriate to today's feast is a song called 'Jealous Of The Angels', and which sappy old me always finds rather moving. Here's Katherine Jenkins' version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t25eKTrNoeY>

And here's Tobias looking far from Angelic in fact rather demonic! It's like a scene from 'The Exorcist'. This is a still from a Morning Prayer video for the children. Mrs. Satterthwaite was filming me, and as it was dusk the iPhone light was on, and every time Tobias looked into the camera his eyes widened! To quote T.S.Eliot, 'then he gave one flash of his glass green eyes...' He certainly did!

Saturday evening's mass was recorded, and is available for the week on the YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdHv0p8amIk&feature=youtu.be> with texts being available at <http://universalis.com/mass.htm>

Once again many thanks for all your return mails. Apologies if I don't reply immediately, sometimes they seem to get lost (or kind of bunched up). Any suggestions for ways to keep our faith and spirits up at this time are most welcome!

And remember, St. Bernadette's is not closed, though the building is, most of the time. We're just doing things differently for a while, until we are allowed to gather together once more, more stronger, more faithful, more loving, more creative, and more grateful for the amazing community that is St. Bernadette's.

With love and faith in Jesus.  
Fr. P.