

## **The Saints still come marching in.**

### **St. Michael and all angels Patron Saint of Brussels, the Sick, Battle, Cemeteries Those in Danger at Sea, Horses and the Mount in Cornwall.**

**Michael** is one of the three great angels venerated in Jewish and Christian tradition. To Christians he is the captain of the army of God which defeated the 'Dragon' or Satan, in Revelations, and he is always invoked by armies, eager to prove their cause just. He is usually shown in armour, bearing a sword and standing over the prostrate enemy. Another popular representation shows him weighing the souls of the dead in a balance and it was widely believed by Jews and Christians that he was given the task of judging mankind.

In the Old Testament he is said to be the protector of God's chosen people and Jewish tradition credits him with the power of life or death and the ability to rescue souls from Hell. There is an apocryphal story of Michael attempting to comfort Abraham in the hour of his death and to reconcile him to the loss of the life he enjoyed on earth.

Jude writes of him arguing with the Devil for the possession of Moses' body and in the early days of Christianity he was regarded as the one who received the souls of the dead and transported them to Heaven, or Hell. This could have been a typical early Christian device to reconcile Roman converts to the loss of Charon, (the guardian of Hades in Roman mythology, who would row the dead over the River Styx, on payment of a fee). It could also be the foundation of the hymn, "Michael, row the boat ashore."

Many churches, like our own, have been built and dedicated to him. Churches on hills, just like Millbrook, were often dedicated to St. Michael and legend says that from these high perches he keeps guard over the surrounding countryside, (or sea in the case of St. Michael's Mount), and wards off enemies both spiritual and physical.

As a result of visionary experiences, St. Michael's Mount, in Cornwall and Mont St. Michel, in France were both given to the Church by St. Aubert. The Cathedral in Coventry, built to replace the one destroyed in the blitz, was also dedicated to Michael and outside the door is a very powerful modern sculpture of the Angel trampling Satan under foot. The addition of "and all angels" is quite recent and was added to give Gabriel, the messenger and Raphael, devotion.

### **St Michael and all Angels**

When did Michael, Raphael and the other Archangels start being treated as Saints? (Question in The Church Times)

Michael is first introduced to us in Daniel 12, "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince that standeth for (protects) the Children of Thy People, (the Jews)". The description links him with the "Captain of the Lord's Host" who helped Joshua. Joshua 5v13-15.

Subsequently the protective role played by Michael in the theology of the Jews was taken into Christian teaching. "And there was war in Heaven, Michael and his angels fought against the dragon." Revelation 12 v7

In the Books of Tobit and Enoch angels are seen as intercessors bringing the troubles and prayers of humanity to the Lord. As the Christian cult of the intercessionary role of Saints and Martyrs developed the early Church included the Jewish angels in the Canon. Michael is described as being held in honour from the very beginning of Christianity, the early Church continuing the veneration in which he was held by the Jews.

(Information The Church Times, with thanks)

Thou, Michael, the victorious,  
I make my circuit under thy shield;  
Thou, Michael, of the white steed,  
And of the brilliant blades,  
Conqueror of the dragon and defender of the righteous,  
Be thou at my back,  
Thou ranger of the heavens,  
Thou warrior of the King of all,  
Keep me and defend me, and set thy watch  
over all who dwell in the shadow of thy Holy Mount.  
Ancient Cornish invocation  
May, Michael, the victorious,  
Make your shelter under his shield;  
May, Michael, of the white steed,  
And of the brilliant blades,  
Conqueror of the dragon and defender of the righteous,  
Be at your back.  
The ranger of the heavens,  
The warrior of the King of all,  
Keep you and defend you, and set his watch over you,  
Now, and as long as you dwell in the shadow of  
his Holy Mount.  
Blessing amended from the above invocation