Reflection for feast of 'St Michael and all Angels'

This week, we just have a transcript. I have linked some beautiful resources at the foot of this document.

At 7.30pm on Wednesday some of us will be meditating in the physical space of the meditation room at Wisdom Centre. The tradition we meditate in is Centering Prayer which is fully inclusive of all traditions of Christian Meditation and welcoming of World Traditions.

Welcome to Christian Meditation in the Centering Prayer Tradition: A very warm welcome from Fiona Jenvey, one of the group leaders of the Christian Meditation group at Wisdom Centre, Romsey. The whole session is about 50 minutes. We meditate in the Centering Prayer tradition, beginning with an opening prayer followed by reflections and then 25 minutes of silence. We hope you enjoy your meditation with us.

Opening Prayer: *Eternal God, with your Angels, Archangels and all the Saints*, and through our meditation may the ears of our hearts be attentive to your Word. May we seek and find You. Awakened to Your presence may we be joyful, embodying peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-awareness. May we follow Your teaching, seeking also, the wisdom of the Holy Fathers and Mothers. May we, therefore, commit to community, love of earth, stability, peace and justice making. **Amen**

Reflections on 'Archangel Michael' and 'All Angels'

Introduction: This week, on the 29th September, the Church celebrates the feast day of St.Michael and All Angels. As some of you know, I am training to be a priest. The Archangel Michael has been an important part of my faith journey, so I am delighted to lead this session.

It is written (Psalm 90:11): "He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

"Cherubim means knowledge in abundance. They provide an everlasting protection for that which appeases God, namely, the calm of your heart, and they will cast a shadow of protection against all the attacks of malign spirits."

--St. John Cassian

The word Angel means different things to different people. For some, departed family, particularly beloved children are Angels in Heaven, I believe this is true. For others, Angels may have significance for a work place of profession. St. Michael is the patron saint of police officers for example. Angels are figures in popular culture. A popular spiritual author, Doreen Virtue, a favourite of the neo-pagan and new age movement describes Archangel Michael as a powerful protector who helps everyone who calls upon him. Doreen Virtue teaches the many ways in which the Miracles of Archangel Michael bring peace and protection, helping people everywhere feel safe, protected, and very loved! Now you may be wondering why I am referring to a popular Pagan author, later I link a recent experience of Doreen to the Biblical Abraham.

Practicing Christians may scoff at the appropriation of Christian Angelic figures into manifesters of personal good fortune, indeed perhaps such an appropriation simply proves the universality of the Archangels, or the ability of Jesus Christ to meet us where we are?

While researching this reflection, I was surprised to learn that Doreen Virtue's latest book "Deceived No More: How Jesus Led Me out of the New Age and into His Word" is about her own conversion from 'New Age' which she newly describes in negative terms as glorifying and

empowering yourself. Christianity, she now believes is about glorifying God and praising Him for His power. Doreen is now asking people to throw away all her previous publications and Angel Cards…and goes on to describe her conversion.

Doreen's experience is a modern version of a conversion experience. To understand the place of Angels in Christianity, and conversion from Paganism, we need to first reflect on Judaism. According to Jewish Scholarship, Abraham is widely known as the first Jew. Abraham grew up in a society where everyone, including Abraham himself, worshiped idols. For us idols may be position, power, possessions, or aspects of personal pride as the opposite of humility.

The Midrash, a textual interpretation (exegesis) of the Torah by Jewish Scriptural authorities tells of the Pagan Abraham as he gazed on the Tower of Babel when under construction. God also gazed upon the tower being created by men for their own glorification. God turned to the seventy angels that surround His throne He said, "They are one people, and they all have one language . . . Let us go down, and there confound their language, that they will become seventy nations with seventy languages." God ordained (chose) Abraham to lead his people. and the seventy angels cast lots to see which angel would be charged with which language and nation. When God's lot was Abraham, He proclaimed, "Portions have fallen to Me in pleasant places; even the lot pleases Me." It was said to be at this time that the covenant (circumcision as a sign) between God and Abraham took place.). Later, Abraham returned to his father's house and destroyed his fathers idols.

Everything until this point is recorded in Talmud (the guide for the daily life of Jews), and within Midrashic sources. We finally meet Abraham in the text of the Bible, when God commands him: "Go forth from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you." (Genesis 12:1). Metaphorically, Abraham leaves Paganism behind.



For those of us familiar with Rublev's Trinity icon (in our prayer room), we see a depiction of three figures which represent Abraham's three visitors (Genesis 18:3). Thought to represent the Trinity in Christianity, in the Jewish tradition (according to the Jewish Scholar Maimonides), the three figures are Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael disguised as Arab wayfarers. Each Angel had a distinct mission, Michael came to heal Abraham from his circumcision, a sign of his covenant with God, Gabriel to announce that Sarah would give birth to a son, and Raphael to overthrow the dissolute city of Sodom. So, in ancient Judeo-Christianity the Angels were bearers of good news, healers and protectors, proof of this ancient belief is found in the Bible. Indeed, it was Gabriel that 'was sent from God to Nazareth. Nazareth was a town in the country of Galilee. He went to a woman who had never had a man. Her name was Mary. She was promised in marriage to a man named Joseph. Joseph was of the family of David. 28 The angel came to her and said, "You are honoured very much. You are a favoured woman. The Lord is with you.' (Luke 1:26-38). Angels again appeared at pivotal moments in the birth, life and death of Jesus.

Michael appears three times in the Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament). In the Book of Daniel, the prophet Daniel has a vision (Daniel 10:13-21) Here Daniel's angelic visitor identifies Michael as the protector of God's people, which Abraham had been given charge over. At Daniel 12:1, Daniel is informed that Michael will arise during the 'end times'

Daniels vision carries through into the new Testament (Christian Bible), the Book of Revelation (12:7-9) describes a war in heaven in which Michael crushes Satan, the ancient serpent who

tries to lead the world astray. Michael is referred to as an Archangel in the Epistle of Jude (1:9), where he also confronts the Devil.

Jewish sages of mystical Judaism taught that every word of our prayers summons an angel who collects it, cleanses it and perfects it, and presents it to God. If the word was enunciated improperly, the angel remolds it so that it is presented correctly. If it was said without proper mindfulness, or worse, if it was chanted with inappropriate thoughts, the angel removes the stray thought and presents the prayer to God in pristine form with proper mindfulness.

So what can Christians and others understand about Archangel Michael and all Angels?

Contemporary In the 4th century, Saint Basil the Great's homily (De Angelis) placed Saint Michael over all the angels. He was called "Archangel" because he heralds other angels, the title 'Archangel' being used of him in Jude 1:9. Into the 6th century, the view of Michael as a healer (based in the mystical Jewish interpretation), continued in Rome following a period of plague and healings attributed to St Michael. In the Roman Catholic and Anglican tradition Michael is understood to be the angelic archetype for the spiritual warrior.
The Eastern Orthodox Christ is accompanied by numerous angels, Michael being the principle figure among them. In Protestant traditions an early view associates Michael with the pre-incarnate Christ. This view comes from the juxtaposition of the 'child' and the archangel in Revelation 12:1–17, but also in the characteristics of the Angel described in Daniel. A particular proponent of this view is Martin Luther. Seventh-day Adventists have traditionally identified Michael the archangel of Jude 9 and Revelation 12:7 as Jesus Christ. Michael was considered the "eternal Word", and not a created being or created angel, and the one by whom all things were created. The Word was then born incarnate as Jesus. Meanwhile, Mormons believe that Michael is Adam, the Ancient of Days (Daniel. 7), a prince, and the patriarch of the human family.

It is clear from this reflection that St Michael and All angels hold many different meanings for different people, both those of faith and those who might consider themselves pagan or new age. Perhaps the words of St Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church speaks into both ancient and modern understandings:

"God is humanity's universal teacher and guardian, but his teaching to humanity is mediated by angels."
--St. Thomas Aquinas

Meanwhile on this feast day, St Hildegard of Bingen, Doctor of the church says:

"God is the brightest of lights which can never be extinguished, and the choirs of angels radiate light from the divinity. Angels are pure praise without any trace of a bodily deed."
--St. Hildegard of Bingen

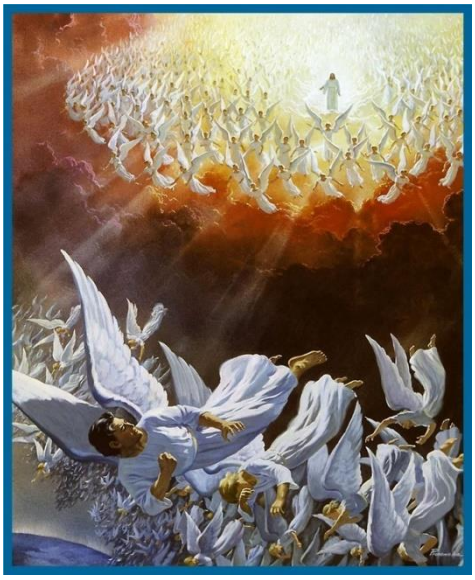
Beginning Meditation: Before beginning our meditation, you may wish to adjust your posture, you may wish to pay particular attention to the rhythm of your breath, taking a calming deep breath in through your nose, and a slow breath out, letting go fully. Then repeat this a few times. If you have a sacred word you might notice its rhythm, perhaps noticing how your word is in time with the breath.

Bell Sounds…25-minute meditations begins…Count down timer starts (or use your own watch or meditation timer app)

Bell Sounds…Meditation ends

Poem after meditation

Michaelmas : Malcolm Guite
to hear this poem click here: https://audioboom.com/posts/481000-michaelmas-sonnet



Michaelmas gales assail the waning year,
And Michael's scale is true, his blade is bright.
He strips dead leaves; and leaves the living clear
To flourish in the touch and reach of light.
Archangel bring your balance, help me turn
Upon this turning world with you and dance
In the Great Dance. Draw near, help me discern,
And trace the hidden grace in change and chance.
Angel of fire, Love's fierce radiance,
Drive through the deep until the steep waves part,
Undo the dragon's sinuous influence
And pierce the clotted darkness in my heart.
Unchain the child you find there, break the spell
And overthrow the tyrannies of Hell.

Closing prayer: Loving and Eternal God, we thank you for the gifts of prayer, meditation and contemplation. We thank you for being with us and for this community. May we, therefore, pray with all others, as one community, one world and one spirit to One God…Moments of your personal prayer follow…**Amen**

Thank you for meditating with us, please join us again soon.

Resources:

The Chaplet of Saint Michael the Archangel, also called the Rosary of the Angels is a chaplet resulting from a reported private revelation by the Archangel Michael to the Portuguese Carmelite nun Antónia de Astónaco. It was approved by Pope Pius IX in 1851

https://traditionalcatholicprayers.com/2019/09/28/chaplet-st-michael/

Music: (traditional) Hymn of the Cherubim https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6veaj2gst8

(Modern) Archangel Michael https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7Ua9dhJK7o

Archangel Michael and His Legions of Blue Flame Angels - Heart of Courage
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bq-Ky0ag9So

For meditation groups, prayer groups, spirituality, wellbeing, retreats, workshops and our labyrinth garden, please visit our website: **wisdomhouseromsey.co.uk**



Our peaceful outdoor spaces promote wellbeing and are open to all, free of charge.