SAINT MICHAEL AS OUR DEFENDER IN SPIRITUAL BATTLE

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Let us sit.

Dear brethren in the Lord Christ, [?] of St. Michael the Archangel, we hear from the lips of the Saviour a call, a call to the effect that we are to become as little children. We may wonder what this is supposed to mean.

My dear brethren, each one of us Catholics is called to make his own face ever more like the face of our Lord Jesus Christ. Each one of us is called, with every day, more and more to resemble the Son of God, so that when we stand before the face of the Divine Majesty after our death, the Heavenly Father may see in our spiritual face the reflection of the face of His beloved Son, so that He may recognise in us His children. This is the call, this is the task, the vocation of every Catholic: to become a child of God.

And this comes about, my dear brethren, through the reception of the holy sacraments, which give us God's grace, which are visible signs of an invisible grace, above all through the reception of Holy Communion. When we eat earthly food, our daily bread, we in a certain sense ennoble it, for from a dead thing it becomes a part of our living human body. But with the divine food, with the bread of angels, with the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is quite the reverse: it is we who, by receiving Holy Communion, are to be made like the food we eat, to be made like the Son of God, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. And in this way we fulfil this vocation, this call, to become as little children, to become children of God.

But anyone would deceive himself who thought that in this process, in this work of becoming like our Lord Jesus Christ, we meet no obstacles. The devil, the age-old enemy of human nature, does all he can to draw us away from this work. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, he works hard and zealously to lead as many souls as possible onto the road that leads to eternal damnation. He takes no holidays, he takes no sick leave; ceaselessly he plots and watches how to attack us. As the holy Apostle writes, like a roaring lion he goes about seeking whom he may devour.

My dear brethren, we must therefore always be ready to fight the devil, who knows perfectly well when and where to strike; the devil, who knows what our weak points are, who knows at what moment we are vulnerable to his attacks, spiritually weak. And that is why we Catholics, who on the one hand understand what we are called to, and on the other hand know our human weakness, our frailty, who know how easily we give way to discouragement, how quickly we fall under the enemy's fire, we Catholics, conscious of our spiritual condition, know that we need help from heaven; that in this spiritual battle which we are waging we cannot rely on our own strength; that in this war between God and Satan, between good and evil, light and darkness, we need a defender from heaven, who will stand at our side, who will cover us with his shield, who will rouse us to the fight.

PRINCE OF THE HEAVENLY HOSTS

And this defender of the holy Church, of each one of us in the fight against the powers of darkness, is the Prince of the heavenly hosts, St. Michael the Archangel. And every Catholic ought to call upon him as defender as often as possible, every day: to call upon the one who was chosen by Almighty God to lead the armies of heaven in the fight against Lucifer, against the devil and his servants. "St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle" – we cry out after every Holy Mass. But let this prayer accompany us every day, until the very end of our earthly life. Let us repeat these words of invocation, let us call upon St. Michael the Archangel for rescue, for help, the one who at the sight of Lucifer's rebellion cried out: "Who is like unto God?" – *Mikael, quis ut Deus*. And that cry became his name. In the biblical tradition a name expresses, determines, who a person is. Can one imagine a more beautiful name for an

archangel than Michael, "Who is like unto God"? That cry which rouses all of us to battle, which reminds us what we live for, where we are headed.

And, my dear brethren, may we follow the Prince of the heavenly hosts; may we, my dear brethren, not give way today to this temptation, so strong, so ever-present: the temptation to doubt. The temptation to doubt God's power, the temptation to doubt the meaning of our spiritual warfare. So many Catholics give up, hoist the white flag, desert from God's banner, because they have ceased to believe that the last word will belong to our Lord Jesus Christ. They have ceased to believe that St. Michael the Archangel is leading us to victory, to triumph over Satan, over the armies of darkness.

And we need, my dear brethren, on this day to renew this faith in the power, in the strength of the heavenly host. All the more because somehow, deep down, we feel that to our own times one could apply, refer, the words which we heard in today's lesson: "For the time is at hand." Truly, the time of God's chastisement, of God's purification is near. Near is the time when each one of us will have to declare whether he wishes to fight under the banner of our Lord Jesus Christ or under the banner of Lucifer. Each one of us, my dear brethren, will have to make this decision. In this war one cannot be neutral, as the whole mass of present-day Catholics would like to remain. "He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth" – says our Saviour. The time is at hand.

And so we must, my dear brethren, prepare ourselves in a special way for the spiritual battle. We must, my dear brethren, strengthen ourselves, gather spiritual ammunition, say the holy Rosary every day. We must, my dear brethren, call upon every day, zealously, with faith and trust, our heavenly defender, St. Michael the Archangel, who will lead us to God, who will lead us to victory. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.