

Contents



Publisher's Note / vii
Editor's Note / ix
Opening Prayer / xiii
Introduction / 1
Chapter One: Strength and Protection / 25
Chapter Two: The Calling / 53
Chapter Three: Guardian of Souls / 77
Chapter Four: Compassion / 91
Closing Prayer / 109
Sources / 113
Bibliography / 117
Credits / 119

Introduction

🌀 The Spiritual Warrior 🌀

Michael the Archangel is the prototype for the virtues of the spiritual warrior, a paradigm we find at the heart of every spiritual tradition.

The spiritual warrior is committed to non-violence in all his relationships. The conflict he engages in is the battle within. This is the struggle to discern his true calling from the endless stream of life's distractions. It requires great courage and forbearance to step onto the inner battlefield and strike down whatever internal demons stand between our real self and our false self.

The spiritual warrior is the most peaceful person in the community. Because he has dedicated himself to truth at all costs, he is incapable of engaging in any behavior that creates misunderstanding or strife. He is the champion of those who suffer and the protector of those who long to be free. In ancient England, he is represented by Saint George, the legendary dragon slayer.

The only legitimate war, says the Qur'an, is the war between the forces of good and evil inside ourselves. This is called the "inner jihad." *Jihad* means "to strive." We never stop striving to overcome our own negativity and to live righteously. This view challenges the bias we so often encounter when the media attempts to define Islam.

The spiritual warrior wields the sword of discrimination. With this weapon always at his side, he is ready to cut through illusion and liberate that which is real. He is never unkind, but he is not always gentle. He is perpetually honing his blade, and his powers of detection are sharp. When he perceives falsehood, he names it, and then he destroys it. He is not afraid. He has nothing to lose.

When we call upon the spirit of Michael, we are invoking the courage and strength to see the truth and live it, to hear the truth and share it, to know the truth and let it change us.

We fearlessly fling open the doors of our own conscience and examine what we find there. Where we see petty jealousy, we smite it. Where

we see irritability toward the people with whom we share our lives, we banish it. Where we see selfishness, indolence, and cynicism, we cut them out of our hearts.

And yet we must always practice compassion toward our adversary: we must forgive ourselves.

Where we see kindness, let us tenderly cultivate it. Where we see playfulness and joy, let us protect it. Where we see self-appreciation, let us embrace it. Wherever there is love, let us hold a feast in its honor.



In Hebrew, the name “Michael” means “who is like God?” This evokes Exodus 15:11: “Who is like to you among the gods, O Lord? Who is like to you, magnificent in holiness?”

Michael embodies the spirit of inquiry. With his sword of discrimination, Michael continuously cuts through the layers of illusion to uncover the truth. He never ceases to question reality.

Is there any other god but God? Do our efforts to define the Divine, to enumerate its attributes and explain its functions, violate its essential

unity and sovereignty? Does naming the Holy One diminish the Holy One?

Have we engaged in activities we have elevated to such exalted status that they have replaced God in our lives? Are we worshipping money and the objects money can buy? Have we made substances our gods, and addiction our primary form of devotion? Maybe we feel trapped in an abusive relationship whereby our life-force is diminished every day. We can ask to borrow Michael's sword and cut through the tentacles we have wrapped around our lives.

Have we resigned ourselves to allowing injustice to unfold in a situation over which we feel we have no control? If we ask Michael, he will show us that we not only have the power but the obligation to stand up for the rights of the oppressed.

Have we been reluctant to excavate our souls and psyches for fear of the darkness we might find there? If we call on him, Michael will infuse us with courage and strength to enter the interior wilderness and banish the demons that keep us on the periphery of an authentic existence.

Michael invites us to cultivate our curiosity and challenge ourselves to place the Divine at the center of everything we do and everything we are.



Michael is also the angel to whom the Holy One assigned the task of delivering the souls of the deceased to the heavenly realms. The Archangel fulfills his role with unutterable tenderness and respect. This has earned Michael the love of people of faith from diverse spiritual traditions throughout time.

Because of his devotion to returning the souls of humanity back to their divine source, the Catholic Church honors the Archangel with the title of Saint. Michael is not canonized because he never died. Yet, like a human saint, the Archangel Michael stands for the people. We feel close to him. We look to him to intercede on our behalf.

Defend Us

Michael is the angel of protection. He is invoked in times of danger. Whenever we feel the spirit of evil playing around the edges of our world, we may call on the Archangel Michael to surround us with a shield of divine light to keep us safe from harm.

Michael is the Angel of the Lord in the Hebrew Bible, who guided the Israelites through the wilderness. In the Roman Catholic liturgy, Saint Michael is the patron saint of the military and the police force. According to Muslims, the archangels are so holy their form is impossible to behold.

Michael's mission is more global than personal. Throughout the ages, the Archangel has appeared in support of those human beings who are taking on some vast task on behalf of humanity, such as Abraham, Sarah, Moses, and Joan of Arc.



According to the legends of the Abrahamic tradition, before the Holy One created earth and all its creatures, he created the angels in heaven, with the sole task of adoring him. This was not arrogance; it was love. The angelic choirs could do nothing but echo God's love back to him. The dazzling radiance of the angelic forms could only mirror the radiant love of the Divine.

And so all the angels bowed down to the Holy One in ecstatic reverence. All except for one angel, who refused to worship him: the one they called Lucifer, bearer of divine light, originally the most luminous angel of all. And Lucifer corrupted lesser spirits, seducing them away from the Divine with false promises.

The Holy One appointed the Archangel Michael, the embodiment of strength and the spirit of protection, to cast Lucifer out of heaven. As Michael engaged Lucifer in battle, the rebel angel took the form of a fire-breathing dragon, and the archangel took the form of a knight in shining armor. Michael fought single-handedly, while Lucifer was flanked by an entourage of evil spirits.

They fought a tremendous battle at the gates of heaven. Michael, the more virtuous opponent, prevailed. He crushed Lucifer beneath his feet and hurled him down to hell. And he chained the evil spirits in midair.

From their vantage point between heaven and earth, the fallen angels could see the glory of paradise spread above them and the wonderment of creation unfold below. To witness these blessings and be unable to participate was a grave punishment.

It is said that the spirit of evil feeds on frustration. It yearns to fully engage with life, to create beauty, to have fun, to taste everything. But it cannot allow itself to do so.

One day, some accounts promise, the Holy One will remember his prisoners and set them free. They will be reformed and they will radiate divine love everywhere—in heaven and on earth and through all the forgotten chambers of the hell realms.



Ruby

Ruby Martinez is the single mother of a sixteen-year-old son named Joaquin. Her husband, Juan de la Cruz, died when Joaquin was nine.

Every year for the past three centuries, Ruby's small community in northern New Mexico holds a weekend celebration in honor of the feast days of Santiago and Santa Ana in July. During "fiestas," the generations mingle and attend Mass together, and people of all ages enjoy the parade, the food, the traditional costumes, and the music that fill the historic town plaza.

Last summer, Joaquin decided to go to a late movie with his friends after fiestas. Ruby agreed. When the movie was over, Joaquin called to tell his mom that he and his friends were on their way home.

"I don't have a good feeling about you being out so late during fiestas," Ruby said. "There are crazy drivers out there tonight."

"We'll take the back roads," Joaquin assured his mom.

When she hung up the phone, Ruby did something she had never done before. She dropped to her knees and called on Saint Michael, uttering the prayer of protection Juan had taught her, pleading with the Archangel to keep their son safe.

“You don’t invoke San Miguel lightly,” Ruby says. “Your need has to be really strong to ask for his help. Michael is about protection against evil. I don’t know exactly what made me think my son was in need of the intercession of San Miguel that night, but the feeling was so strong I couldn’t ignore it.”

As Ruby prayed, a sense of profound peace and well-being washed over her. She sat in quiet meditation late into the night, until the phone rang. It was Joaquin’s friend.

“There’s been an accident but everyone’s okay,” he said in a rush before Ruby would have time to panic. “Someone’s coming to pick us up, and they’ll drop Joaquin off at home.”

Joaquin walked through the door a little while later, expecting his mother to be hysterical. Instead, Ruby was completely calm. She took him into the bathroom and examined the

small cuts on his face, then washed them and applied ointment.

Joaquin told his mother that the car had rolled several times and both back tires had blown out. “All I remember is closing my eyes and falling through space,” Joaquin said. “We should all be dead.”

But Joaquin’s minor abrasions represented the full extent of the injuries involved. The car was totaled.

“You had some powerful angels on your side tonight, son,” Ruby said.

Earlier that same summer, Joaquin had traveled to Miami to visit his sister, who was living there. He had returned with a tattoo of the archangel Michael battling *el Diablo* on his arm. He braced himself for his mother’s displeasure, but, to his amazement, Ruby was not upset. Instead, she chose that moment to disclose an important aspect of Joaquin’s spiritual legacy: “San Miguel was your father’s patron saint,” she informed her son. It was as if Joaquin had a premonition of the danger he would soon face.