

Readings

Dn 12:1-3

Ps 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11

Heb 10:11-14, 18

Mk 13:24-32

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“May Saint Michael guard and guide us.”

Today from the Book of Daniel we heard a call to “Michael, the great prince, guardian of your people.”

Hearing this, I easily call to mind the traditional prayer to Saint Michael that I prayed as a child in the prayers after Mass. In it, we prayed

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.
Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray,
and do you, O Prince of the heavenly hosts,
by the power of God,
thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits,
who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen

Michael, the Archangel, in this prayer is our defender in battle.

Our readings today have the tone of battle. As our Church year is coming to an end, these and our other readings at other Masses remind us of the end time and our need to prepare for the final judgment. In our recent election we have heard much about battles.

YET, our reading from the Gospel of Saint Mark tells us to “Learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branch becomes tender and it sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near.” With the ending of this Church year we need to be ready for the new Church Year when Saint Mark goes on and tells us, “when you see these things happening, know that [the Lord] is near.” He is

near in St. Michael our defender in battle and in the fig tree preparing for summer and blossoming. As our battles are near and we seek our protector, we need to open our eyes to see when the branches are sprouting.

We should not limit the opening of our eyes in anticipation of the sprouting branches as this Church Year ends and a new Church Year begins. Guided by the wisdom of our reading from Daniel to be wise to see the presence of people among us who “shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament,” as they “lead the many to justice,” serving “like the stars forever,” guiding us with their brightness. Let us pray with our Responsorial Psalm that through them, “O Lord, you will show me the path to life, fullness of joys in your presence, the delights at your right hand forever.” To see the brightness, we will need to look beyond our differences and our oppositional positions with a spirit of forgiveness for sins. The Letter to the Hebrews today reminds us that every celebration of the Eucharist is the one sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins providing us with the grace for our journeys through those whom God has put in our path to aid in overcoming our problems.

When we think of preparing for the coming Church Year, let us think how we can blossom like fig trees and shine like bright lights for others. We don’t need to leave Saint Michael on the battlefield, we can call on him to guide and guard us on our journeys. Pope Benedict saw Saint Michael as a Guardian Angel for all of us. When he was ordaining bishops he prayed, that they should be like Saint Michael “true guardian angels.” In the thought of Pope Benedict let us pray for us and our new Church Year,

Saint Michael,
help us the People of God in our pilgrimage
to find the joy of faith and
to learn to discern the spirits,
that is, to accept good and reject evil,
to remain, and increasingly to become
by virtue of the hope of faith,
people who love in communion with God
now, in our new Church Year, and forever.

Guided by our prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel, our guardian and guide, let us ask ourselves these 3 questions:

1. As we prepare to enter the new Church Year, how can I, in my own life, be like the fig tree that blossoms to find signs of God's presence and guidance, even in our challenging and uncertain times?

2. As we prepare to enter the new Church Year, how can I call upon Saint Michael and other sources of spiritual strength to help me become a "bright light" for others, leading those around me toward justice, peace, and reconciliation?

3. As we prepare to enter the new Church Year, what steps can I take to move beyond oppositional positions and find unity and common purpose with others, especially through forgiveness and grace?

May Saint Michael guard and guide us. Amen.