



The heavenly host and our modern life



Immanuel

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. But to which of the angels said he at any times, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

(Hebrew 1)

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Monk Vsevolod :



On November 8/21 the Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of the holy Archangel Michael and the entire Heavenly Host. This celebration has great significance not only for Orthodox Christians, but for all of mankind. How is that? First of all, this celebration teaches us how to view correctly the question of equality and inequality. Mankind, especially from the beginning of the 20th century, is fervently searching for a certain equality which supposedly may be established on earth. Russia has become the primary victim of this idea, followed by other countries. The promised equality has never been established, of course, but traditional forms of government have been destroyed. Orthodox monarchy, which was the last mighty bulwark of universal Orthodoxy, was destroyed in Russia, and countless victims were sacrificed on the bloody altar of imaginary equality. How does this tie in with the feast of the Heavenly Host? Very directly. If mankind were less attracted to transient earthly ideas, but instead, gazed upward more often, it would notice that even in heaven, among the holy angels, there does not exist the senseless equality over which the godless rave so madly. In the world of the angels, as everywhere in God's creation, there exists a definite hierarchy established by God. This hierarchical subordination and this blessed inequality cement the entire structure. If they were taken out, the structure would collapse. In the case of the angels, such a partial destruction of their heavenly assembly occurred after the insurrection provoked by the highest and most powerful angel, Lucifer, who from that time on became the father of all those fighters for equality who actually fight against God.



If Lucifer had not fallen, then the Church would probably have established a feast in his honor, as it did in honor of the holy Archangel Michael. But Lucifer did not wish to subordinate himself to God. He dreamed of becoming equal to Him and lured away part of the angels to follow him in his struggle against God. Thus the brightest angel became the blackest devil -

Satan. Against Satan's army there arose the Archangel Michael, one of the highest angels who had remained faithful to the Creator. Going into battle at the head of the bright angels, the Archangel cried out: "Who else but God?" - thereby denouncing proud Satan and all the godless of the future.

The angels of God vanquished the dark forces of the first rebels, and Satan, together with the other demons, fell like lightning into the netherworld. From that time the Archangel Michael became the head of the entire heavenly host. For his zeal in

working for God he is honored by the Church even to this day. However, the demonic forces continue their battle against the followers of Christ. God allows this, in order for us to be able to exhibit spiritual steadfastness and fealty to the Trinity.

We are surrounded by danger everywhere. But in this daily and hourly struggle we are provided by God with great defenders and helpers - the holy angels, headed by the seven highest archangels; their names are Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Salaphiel, Jegudiel, Barachiel.

We have already spoken of the Archangel Michael. Archangel Gabriel has been entrusted with the service of being messenger to mankind. He came with the Lord's tidings of forthcoming miraculous events to the parents of St. John the Baptist, to the parents of the Holy Virgin Mary, and also to the Mother of God Herself and to the righteous Joseph. Archangel Gabriel is the messenger of God's Providence, the attendant of miracles and divine Mysteries. When we are overcome with doubts, when it seems to us that we have been abandoned by everyone and there is no help from anywhere, let us pray to Archangel Gabriel, that by his prayers the Lord would reveal to us His most holy will and would set our life upon the course of salvation.



Archangel Raphael is a merciful healer, sent by God to comfort the sick and the sorrowing. From the Holy Scripture we know that Archangel Raphael expelled demons from a woman. And how many people there are nowadays who are possessed by demons.... Alas, both they and their relatives often turn for help to sorcerers who nowadays hide behind the pseudo-scientific name of "extrasensories." But will sorcerers, these servants of the devil, expel demons? Obviously not. The power to expel demons and heal those who are possessed by them belongs to the holy angels and particularly to Archangel Raphael.

Let us ask him to intercede for us before the Lord, Giver of all good things.



The name of Archangel Uriel means the light or the fire

of God. This archangel enlightens the minds and the hearts of the faithful with the light of divine truths and the fire of divine love. All those who embark upon the study of knowledge can and should pray to this archangel to enlighten their minds and hearts, in order to avoid a destructive chasm between knowledge and faith.

Archangel Salaphiel is the patron of prayer. He is even depicted so on icons: with eyes gazing downward, with hands crossed on his chest, with an air of humility and deep inner concentration. He is our primary teacher of prayer. Prayer is the most difficult thing to achieve, and one must be instructed in it. Unfortunately, some people assiduously study various worldly subjects, but disdain the study of the most important subject in the world - the Jesus prayer. Let us pray to Archangel Salaphiel for the Lord to grant us this gift of divine prayer.



Archangel Jegudiel is the patron, defender and helper of all those who toil. And we must all be such, for we have been commanded to eat our bread in the sweat of our faces. We toil not only physically, to earn our daily bread, but also spiritually, in order to perfect ourselves. Archangel Jegudiel is depicted on icons with a crown of victory in his hands. Such crowns will be earned by those of us who will endure to the very end, who will worthily bear the light yoke of Christ. We are faced with a complex task, so let us ask Archangel Jegudiel for help in our daily lives.



Archangel Barachiel is the angel of God's blessings. While asking God to bless all our good efforts, let us also appeal to Archangel Barachiel for help. However, we must accept the Lord's blessing not only for prosperity but also for our cross, i.e. the sorrows without which there is no salvation. And may Archangel Barachiel give us strength to carry our blessed crosses.

In celebrating the feast of the angelic Host, let us not forget the most important thing, -and that is the faithfulness to God exhibited by the holy angels together with Archangel Michael. May the Lord help us, too, be ready to sacrifice ourselves for Christ.

Following the example of the angels' fealty, let us also remain faithful to true Orthodoxy. And nowadays this is more important than ever before, because Orthodoxy is attacked from all sides by the adherents of other religions and by the unfaithful, who demand that very same infamous equality, this time among all religions. We can never agree to such an equalization of Orthodoxy with religions which have distorted the true worship of God, because we know that there is no salvation outside of Orthodoxy. Let us appreciate our Orthodox faith, which teaches us true knowledge and true worship of God, for which, eons ago, the archangel of God Michael and his entire heavenly host battled in the heavens.

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Angels and demons

In the month of November we celebrate the feast of the entire angelic host, which includes our closest friends in this world - our guardian angels. Although we cannot see the angels with our physical eyes, if we open the eyes of our hearts and minds, we will realize the great significance angels have in our lives. God sent us angels to be our traveling companions and our guides in this life, to guard us and protect us from all evil. They are also our most faithful allies in our struggle against the forces of evil.



God is absolute Love, and this love impelled Him to create intelligent beings who would be able to comprehend love, to love God and participate in His bliss. The first such beings to be created were the angels. God endowed them with great abilities and settled them in His heavenly abode. However, though the angels possessed a great deal of perfection, they were not absolutely perfect, and so were open to the influence of passions. Thus it came about that some of the angels, seduced by the thought of their limited perfections, entered a state of pride, which became the cause of their fall. Lucifer was the first to rebel in pride against his Creator, and he was followed by many other angels who left God. But to leave God means to leave life and embrace death. The rebellious spirits left God of their own accord, and the just Lord

also left them, leaving them to their own will. And what consequently happened? The faithful angels separated themselves from the rebels and rejected them with horror, while the rebellious ones turned from bright angels into angels of darkness. Those who had just recently shone with divine glory, now became an object of revulsion and horror throughout the entire heaven and even to themselves. Those who had just recently sung the glory of God, now began to curse and blaspheme. Driven out from heaven by the bright angels and tormented by their own rage, they fell with the speed of lightning into the abyss of hell. The angels who had remained faithful to God now became absolutely perfect. The Lord rules the universe together with them and uses them as His faithful messengers. The angels are like a model of the perfection and the majesty of God. Their minds and knowledge have no other limits except those imposed by God upon His own creation. The angels are also endowed with superior strength and might, by means of which they are able, in accordance with God's will, to act upon bodies and the physical world.

But as much as the bright angels are perfect and blissful, so the fallen angels, together with their leader Satan, are horrible and evil. They are eternally tormented by an intense hatred of God, a desire for revenge and utter despair. This is what the struggle of good and evil is all about: it is the struggle of Satan against God and all His creation. The action of evil forces in the world is quite evident, especially in our times. But from whence springs this great rage with which they are trying to destroy us? Being unable to attack God Himself, they attack Him through His creation, especially through man, who has been created in His likeness and image. What hellish pleasure they find in defiling this image and taking away from the Creator His favorite creation! Being unable to do good, the evil spirits feel a great satisfaction in making man participate in their crimes and share their punishment. And can Satan remain indifferent to us, knowing that we live in the hope of attaining the eternal bliss which he himself has lost? He becomes greatly enraged at the thought that the faithful followers of Jesus Christ, together with the bright angels, will judge him at the end of time. This envy burns him more powerfully than the flames of hell. For this he tries to move heaven and earth, just to lure us into his net. He turns all his anger against us and becomes most dangerous when he attacks not openly, but with the various enticements and wiles of his devious mind. But it is at this point that the angels come to help us! In order to encourage and support His creation, His faithful sons, in their fierce and unequal battle with the forces of evil, the Lord sends us His angels, His heavenly troops. To each of us He assigns one of them, who becomes our guardian angel, our protector. And it is not only each Christian who has his own guardian angel, but each family, each pious society, each nation. The angels are the friends and brothers of the people on earth. They are so imbued with the love of God, that they immensely love us, too, because in us they see the same gifts of God's grace which they themselves possess. Truly, in the words of King David, man is a being who is only slightly lower



than the angels. The angels love us and participate wholeheartedly in our salvation, which is just as precious to them as their own holiness. They feel great joy at our salvation and do their utmost to keep us on the right path. Let us love and value these wonderful friends and helpers of ours, especially our guardian angel; let us constantly turn to them in prayer, as to our nearest and dearest, so that together with them we would be able to enjoy eternal life in heavenly bliss!

