

Michael as Healer

Christian Legends from Egypt

The Leper Jew

On the isle of Cyprus, people had toiled for a long time to build a church in honor of St. Michael. The people were assembled to see the Bishop consecrate the church. At this moment came a Jew who was stricken with leprosy to the gate and, leaning against a column, watched the consecration. After the Bishop had sprinkled the walls with Holy Water, the Jew took some and moistened his body therewith. Then he anointed himself with the oil of the lamp burning before the Archangel's picture and said: "Holy Archangel Michael! Heal my disease, and I will serve thee unto death!" The Jew spent the following night in the church and was healed the next morning. Full of joy he ran to the Bishop, told him what had happened and asked to be baptized. And he and his whole family served the Archangel faithfully unto death.

The Unfulfilled Vow

Among the Roman gentlefolk, there was a God-fearing couple. They had no children, although they had prayed unto God to give them some offspring. Once they went to church on the day of St. Michael. And when they saw so many parents with their children, the wife wept bitterly and said: "Oh Lord! Have mercy on me and give me a child, so that my eyes may rejoice at its sight. Holy Archangel Michael! Pray thou unto God that He may send unto me a boy or girl. I will consecrate the child to thy service, until death!"

After Mass had been said, the wife remained behind in her sorrow and spent the whole night in the church. And then appeared to her the Archangel Michael in all his radiance, saying: "God has granted thy request. Thou wilt conceive and bear a boy. And thou shalt call him Michael!" And the wife was exceedingly happy and returned to her home and praised God in her heart.

After a time, the promise was fulfilled and she gave birth to a boy who was fair and called Michael. When the child grew up, his parents did not want to part from him and thus did not let him go to church. But suddenly the child fell grievously ill, so that no physician could help him. The terrified mother recognized that the unfulfilled vow was the cause of the illness. Hastily, she carried the child to the church, bathed him in the Holy Water, and anointed him with the oil of the lamp burning in front of St. Michael's picture, and prayed

aloud: “Oh Holy Archangel Michael! Heal this child from his disease! Have mercy and redeem him. And he will serve thee throughout his life here in thy abode!”

She and the child spent the whole night in the church. On the following day, the boy was healed. And he served his patron St. Michael to the end of his life.

The Blind Man

A Christian became suddenly sorely ill and lost his eyesight. Once when he attended, in company with many people, a festival in honor of the Archangel Michael, he broke into tears and prayed: “Holy Michael, who intercedest with God to help us mortals, pray that I may recover my eyesight. I shall serve thee forever and ever!” In deepest grief, he spent the night in the church.

At midnight the archangel appeared, awakened the blind man from his sleep and said: “Do not forget thy vow!” And St. Michael touched the blind eyes with his pure hands and blessed them. And it was as if scales had fallen away from the man’s eyes and he could see anew. Rejoicing exceedingly, he praised The Lord and fulfilled his promise to the Archangel Michael.

The Possessed

On a festival day, when the Bishop said the Mass before many people, a possessed man entered the church at the moment when the Gospel was proclaimed. And a terrifying voice howled and shrieked out of him: “Where should one turn and how flee from thee, oh Archangel Michael? Thou art the cause why we must shun Heaven and cannot find rest on the earth!”

And Michael appeared in all his radiance, in a king’s garment. In his hand, he held a golden scepter with the Holy Cross. He seized Satan and hung him up in the middle of the church. Then cried the evil one: “In the Name of Him Who has given thee all this glory, I implore thee, St. Michael, to liberate me. Henceforth I shall not dare to enter an abode where thy name is sanctified.”

Then the archangel liberated the devil from his uncomfortable position and the evil one, full of shame, fled from the church. But the possessed man was healed and served Michael unto his death.

Worship of Michael

From the Time of Charlemagne to the 10th Century

Sequence on St. Michael

Dedicated to Emperor Charlemagne

Michael!

Archangel of the Highest King!

Hearken, we pray thee, to our call.

For this we confess:

Thou art the leader of the Heavenly Hosts.

Thou hast asked God to let thee lead the angels

To the salvation of mankind.

May the enemies, even though ever so desirous

To violate weary souls,

Not vanquish us with their wiles.

Thou, Oh Michael, ever holdest

The fullness of might in eternal paradise.

Ever do the holy angels praise thee.

Thou hast been beheld

While holding in thy hands in the Temple of God

The golden cup full of incense.

From it was wafted marvelous fragrance

And rose to God's Countenance.

Thou, with a hero's hand,

Hast slain the fearful dragon.

Out of its jaws

Thou hast torn most of the souls.

Thus there arose profound stillness in heaven

And thousands and thousands of voices proclaimed:

"Hail to Thee, the King, the Lord."

Hear us, Oh Michael,

Highest of all angels.

Descend a few steps

From the heavenly throne.

Bring us help from God,

Grant us mercy to ease our burden.

Gabriel, mayest thou
Fell to the ground our enemies.
Raphael, mayest thou
Heal the sick,
Stop the pestilence,
Ease the suffering.
Let us partake
Of blessed rejoicing!
This chant is sung for thee By the wise Emperor.

– Latin Hymn from the Middle Ages

The Dragon of Ireland

In the middle of the 10th century, when King Elgar ruled in Ireland, and Ivor, the Archbishop from Norway, had his episcopal See in Armagh, the country was threatened by great disaster. A dragon, who had assuredly been spewn out by the jaws of hell, ravaged the whole island. The animal was dreadful to see. Its body was stronger than the most towering oak in the ancient forest of Limerick. Its scales forming an impenetrable armor shimmered uncannily either in emerald green or fiery red. Underneath the sharp horns on its head, bloodthirsty eyes were gleaming. The terrifying jaws, which were studded with a threefold row of fangs, incessantly spewed out poison.

Nothing could stop the monster: not the Basaltic mountains with their steep inclines, and not even the bay of the ocean with its violently surging waves. Wherever the monster came, it left behind nothing but ruins. The fields over which its heavy body rolled remained barren for all time. When the monster moved across wide meadows to attack grazing horses and cattle, it seemed as if blazing flames scorched the grass. The water of the rivers from which the dragon used to drink emitted a pestilential odor. The same odor poisoning the countryside came out of the forests in which the dragon was wont to sleep.

At first the dragon contented itself with killing animals. But now it began, when dusk set in, to rove around towns and lie in ambush waiting for men who were late getting home. Women who went to the shore with their washing and children returning home were slain by the hundreds. No one ventured any more to leave his house. In wealthy towns as well as in poor villages, the terrified inhabitants gave their souls into God's keeping.

Finally, after the King had held a counsel with the Archbishop, it was decided to declare war on the monster. Ivor, the Bishop, commanded that everyone should fast for three days. Then, after the most valiant soldiers of Armagh had been assembled, the attack was set for the feast day of St. Patrick. The beast was one

mile away from the town in a barren heath without trees. This was favorable for the struggle and it was decided to surround it from all sides. The fighters advanced early in the morning, armed with spears, swords, and poisoned arrows. Before them, amidst the undulating crosses and banners, the relics of Irish Saints were carried. But, despite their faith and valor, all trembled as if going to their execution. Here was the monster! How the souls of the fighters were split! Should they dare to attack the dragon, or would it be better to flee? But soon their faith in God reasserted itself. Amidst fearful shouting, they hurled their spears and lances against the monster. It lay there without moving, as if asleep. Or was it already dead? The most valiant men advanced towards the beast to pierce it with their swords. But—what a miracle—it was dead. Out of a small wound, which could not have been caused by the weapons of the Irish, a black blood stream was welling forth. Thereupon the whole multitude, shouting imprecations, rushed up to the corpse and tore it to pieces. Then they fetched faggots and dry grass, made a fire, and burned the monster so that nothing remained behind but a pile of ashes.

Suddenly the Archbishop discovered amidst the ashes a sword and shield different from those used by warriors. The weapons looked like a child's toys. A round shield with strong leather girths and golden clasps had many small crosses on the surface, which was overlaid with a profusion of amethysts and topazes. Then there was a sword of finest steel, whose point was still stained with the monster's blood. The Archbishop kneeled down before these weapons, raised them up, and had them carried ceremoniously into the Cathedral of Armagh, where the people intoned the *Te Deum*.

One thing was certain: God had performed a miracle to save the holy island. But who could have been the heavenly messenger who had hurled, with such dainty weapons, the deadly thrust against the dragon?

When the Archbishop, after praying ardently, had fallen asleep, the Archangel Michael appeared unto him and commanded that the weapons, with which he had defeated the monster, should be brought at once to the place holding Michael's favorite sanctuary on earth. But before the Archbishop could ask the leader of the Heavenly Hosts after the name of this place, Michael vanished.

Then did the Archbishop appoint two priests who were to go forth with the weapons and, God willing, try to find the place favored by St. Michael. The priests sailed across the sea to England. Then, after crossing another sea and landing in France, they directed their steps to Italy. For they believed that Mount Gargano, where Michael was worshipped, was bound to be the goal of their journey. Thus they wandered onward and believed to be going toward the South. But finally they noticed that, against their will, they went continuously Westward. Whichever path they chose, the sun was ever setting before their eyes. Then they saw clearly that Mount Gargano was not the place that had been in Michael's

mind. And they prayed unto St. Michael that he might take pity on them. For they did not know where to turn and their feet were sore. Once, when they were dead tired and completely despondent, fearing the anger of the Irish and the reproaches of the Bishop, they implored God most fervently to help them. Then appeared Michael unto them, saying: "Direct your steps to Mount Tumbé; there is my real abode."

A pious hermit gave them shelter during the night and showed them the way. And thirty days later, they arrived at the mountain around which the waves were surging. Their heart was stirred as they knocked at the monastery's gate. The Abbot himself opened the gate with these words: "I have awaited your coming, dear brethren! Last night the cause of your pilgrimage was revealed to me in a dream. I know whence ye come after such long wandering. Hand to me the glorious weapons and then let us praise God!"

From that day on, the weapons reposed in the monastery's treasure house, where they were worshipped by pious pilgrims during five centuries. But, in the year 1850, Arthur de Cosé, the Bishop of Contames, who was not kept back from robbery by his priestly vestments, took the treasure away from Mont Saint-Michel. And since then the precious trophies have been lost by Ireland.

– French Legend