

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