

## *26th Sunday in Ordinary Time*

In the Book of Revelation St. Michael battles against Satan. Michael first appeared in the Book of Daniel, which calls him a prince who supports God's cause and a guardian of the people in times of distress. The Epistle of Jude calls Michael an archangel. Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians says that when Christ comes again we'll hear the sound of a trumpet and the voice of the archangel, presumably Michael. When his angels fight the devil's angels in the Book of Revelation, Michael is the victor.

For these reasons, the Catholic Church names Michael as a patron saint of those who protect us from danger: police officers, firefighters, emergency responders, and active members of the military. We celebrate the feast of Michael and all the angels on September 29 every year. Many churches choose a Sunday close to that feast to welcome those who serve our community under the patronage of St. Michael. We have invited them here to mass today. If you are a police officer, firefighter, emergency responder, or active in the military, would you please stand? Thank you for your service. We assure you of our prayers. Satan and the forces of evil had no power over St. Michael and the forces of good. We believe that you too are stronger than evil. We are not naive. We know that there are bad people on our streets. Some of them even live in our homes. We know that our lives are in danger even if we simply drive a car through our neighborhood. We also know that you put your lives at risk every day for our sakes. You have received special training, and you possess special equipment to protect us when we most need help. You also have something more: You have a heart for us. You care about this community, and you want us to thrive. We pray for you because we need you. If you are safe, we are safe. But we also pray for you for another reason. You love us, and we love you.

Still, my brothers and sisters, as much as we need these public servants, they need us. They need us to obey the laws of the land, to take care of our homes, and to preserve our good health. Occasionally some citizen performs an extraordinary act of valor for a person in danger, and is called a hero. Any one of us may need to help someone else in a time of emergency. We need to be ready to help our public servants in many ways.

In today's first reading, God took some of the spirit that was on Moses and shared it with 70 elders, so that more people would enjoy gifts of the spirit and share them more broadly with the community. The spirit also rested on two guys who were not supposed to receive it - Eldad and Medad. They started prophesying. Joshua told Moses, "Stop them." But Moses would not. He said, "Would that all the people of the LORD were prophets! Would that the LORD might bestow his spirit on them all!"

This is the spirit with which we need to embrace the protection of our neighborhood. We are grateful to those who help us in times of distress, but we have all received a little of this spirit of love, protection and care. The more we share it, the better we make our community, and the easier we make the work of our police, firefighters, emergency responders and military. St. Michael protects all of us whenever we step up to help our neighbor with the spirit we have received.

*Sunday, September 27, 2015*