

## 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

In the Book of Daniel, Michael is a guardian of the people in times of distress. In the Book of Revelation, when his angels fight the devil's angels, Michael conquers.

The Catholic Church names Michael as saint for those who protect us from danger, the patron of police officers, firefighters and emergency responders. 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 the community under his patronage. We have invited them here to mass today. If you are a police officer, firefighter or emergency responder, would you please stand? Thank you for your service. We pray for you. St. Michael and his forces of good overpowered the forces of evil. You also conquer evil. Bad people prowl our streets. Accidents happen in our homes. You put your lives at risk every day for our sakes. You possess special equipment to protect us. You also have something more: love for the law.

Law is good, whether it is civil, natural, or ecclesial. Laws help us respect one another. As humans, we sometimes feel that the law curtails our personal freedom, but it exists for our own safety and to protect the rights of others. We don't always think about loving our laws, but that is how the bible approaches them. In today's responsorial psalm we sang, "The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart." True joy comes not from eluding the law, but from following the law. It develops respect; it fosters peace.

We need a police force, a fire department and emergency responders because people do not always follow the law. Sometimes we fail to take care of our own health and safety, not putting limits onto our own selfish desires. By not following even the common laws of courtesy and character, we put ourselves and others at risk. Other times we sin through a serious disrespect for people we think stand in the way of our joy. But true joy comes from living in a community that respects rights.

In a partisan world, we sometimes confuse political opponents with enemies. We refuse to admit that those who support opposing measures generally believe that their position respects human rights and brings joy to the heart. Good people believe that the measures they support will not tear down a society, but build it up. We may disagree on how laws should look, but we can agree that we need them. One way to build a more peaceful society is to look for the good within those who hold views that oppose ours. Like the wonder-workers in today's first reading and gospel, people outside our circle of support sometimes contribute to society. When we deal in fairness with those with whom we disagree, we stitch a strong fabric in our society, a protective tent that will ease the work of our public servants.

Sometimes our fight is with the devil's angels, and in our distress we need a guardian like St. Michael. Other times we simply lack joy. We shout, push, bully or break the law just to get our way, even in the face of a legitimate alternative way. There is common ground. We will find it among the precepts of the Lord. They give joy to the heart.

Sunday, September 30, 2018