

**Feast of Saints Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, archangels      September 29th**

Dn 7:9-10, 13-14

or

Rev 12:7-12ab

Ps 138:1-2ab, 2cde-3, 4-5

Jn 1:47-51

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***Knowing and Loving God with the Help of the Archangels***

God knows each one of us — our joys, strengths and weaknesses, our successes and failures, our faith, our intentions, needs, hopes and dreams. In John's gospel today, Nathanael was surprised that Jesus knew that he was a true Israelite. Nathanael said to Jesus, "How do you know me?" And Jesus said, "*Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree.*"

Not only does God know us; He loves us. The first reading from the Book of Daniel presents a vision of the Son of Man, the One in whom and through whom the salvation of God's people came to be realized. The Book of Daniel writes, "*His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away, his kingship shall not be destroyed.*" Imagine that! Our salvation is happening right now, as long as we keep on saying "Yes" to God and participate in His plan of salvation. How eternal, how immense and great is God's love for us! We are indeed graced and blessed by God, especially through Jesus Christ!

But how much do we know God? How much do we love God? We know and love God through prayer, through our ministries, in our religious lives and in our relationships with other people. We know and love God through our participation in the sacraments, through Scripture and meditation and through our studies of theology. We

know God through the life, death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

So we have various ways of knowing and loving God. Our Holy Father St. Augustine even says in the *Confessions*, ““*Lord, let me know myself, let me know You.*””

But how about knowing and loving God with the help of the Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, whose feast we celebrate today. Michael, in Jewish meaning ““who is like God,”” appears twice in the Old Testament and twice in the New Testament. He is the protector of the Chosen Peoples, both Christian and Jew, leader of the Heavenly Host against Satan, and protector of Christians at the hour of death. He is usually shown as a winged warrior subduing the devil and sometimes carries a set of scales for the weighing of the Soul at death.

Gabriel — his name means ““Strength of God”” or ““Hero of God.”” In the Old Testament he appears twice in the Book of Daniel and in the New Testament he announces the birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias and the birth of Jesus to Mary. In Christian art he is frequently represented as a winged figure, often holding a lily representing purity, bringing the message of the Incarnation to the Virgin Mary.

Raphael — his name means ““God heals”” so we can ask for his prayers for healing and recovery. In the Old Testament, the Archangel Raphael appears in the Book of Tobit, where he cures Tobit’s blindness by instructing the son Tobias to put the gall bladder of a fish on his father’s eye.

The Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael — they all point us to God, through Jesus Christ, who is our protector, our strength, our hero and our healer. But we, too, have these responsibilities — of protecting each other, of strengthening each other, of healing each other. This is partly what the *Rule of St. Augustine* is all about.

Loving and supporting one another — this is our vocation, this is our commitment to each other, this is our Augustinian religious life — a life of real self-sacrifice, as St. Thomas of Villanova once said.

We can ask for St. Michael's prayers for spiritual protection and to help us to protect each other. We can ask for St. Gabriel's prayers for strength, for courage and to help us to strengthen one other and announce each others' goodneses and gifts. We can also ask for the prayers of St. Raphael to help us to heal each other and comfort each other in time of difficulty and distress. These are some of the ways in which we can truly know and love God. Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, please continue to pray for us and lead us to that beatific vision with God.