**SYNAXIS OF THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL AND THE OTHER BODILESS POWERS**

According to the teaching of the Orthodox Church, before creating the visible world the Lord God created the invisible world - the angels. At the head of the first stood the Archangel Michael, whose feast we commemorated that Friday November 8. The Holy Archangel Michael is one of the most celebrated of the Angels and bodiless powers; he is called the Archistrategos, or chief commander, of all the bodiless powers. According to Holy Scripture and Tradition, he has interceded for humanity multiple times and continues to serve as the Defender of the Faith. The name Michael means "like unto God" or "Who is like unto God?

Angels were sent many times to aid the Israeli judge Gideon, the prophet Elias, the prophet Daniel, and many others. In the New Testament the Archangel Gabriel brought to the Virgin Mary glad tidings of the beginning of salvation, angels announced the nativity of Christ to the shepherds, an angel warned of Herod’s evil intentions, and an angel appeared to the Magi, restraining them from going back to Herod. An angel comforted the Saviour before His sufferings, and angels brought glad tidings of Christ’s resurrection to the myrrh-bearing women. And finally, when the Son of Man returns to earth in glory, He will be accompanied by all the holy angels.

Each person receives at baptism a special guardian angel. Like a loyal guard, and without pressuring our will, this invisible protector of us and delivers us from all evil, misfortune, and sorrow, and serves as our guide on the path towards the safe haven of Christ’s kingdom. Even the psalm writer King David pointed out this mission of the angels: *“For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone”*(Psalm 91:11-12). And the Lord also said: *“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father Which is in heaven”*(Matt. 18:10). With these words Christ warns us to treat children with all due attention, for they have angels, their guardians, who are always ready to petition God against those who dare humiliate the children they protect.

And, finally, in that terrible hour when the trembling soul, after being parted from its body, comes to stand before God’s judgment, when neither friends, nor benefactors, nor even the closest relatives are able to help us any longer, then only our guardian angel will be our protector from the evil tormentors – the demons.

However, we must bear in mind that such aid on the part of the guardian angels, which cannot be replaced by anyone or anything, occurs only while we, even though we be sinners, try to fulfill the will of God. “Just as bees are repelled by smoke and doves by stench, – says St. Basil the Great, – so the guardian of our life – the angel – is repelled by malodorous sin.”

The life of St. Niphontus, Bishop of Cyprus, contains an account of how the saint once saw an angel in the guise of a youth, sitting at the gates of a house of ill repute and bitterly crying. He asked about the cause of the tears, and the angel replied: “I have been assigned by God to guard a certain man who is now staying in this house and is thus severely offending me; I am unable to watch his iniquities, and how should I not cry, when I look at the dark abyss into which an image of God has fallen?” The blessed Niphontus then said: “Why do you not punish him, so he would give over sinning?” – “I do not have any chance of approaching him, – replied the angel, – since from the time he began sinning, he has become the slave of demons, and I have no power over him; for God created man with free will and showed him both the narrow path and the wide one, in order for man to follow whichever he will.”

Thus, dear brother and sisters, cherish your invisible guide, the fellow traveler of your entire life – your guardian angel, – and you will do well. Amen.