

Legends Concerning Michael's Workings in Places Consecrated to Him

If we follow the activity of Michael during the first post-Christian centuries, the local traditions show us that Michael's activity proceeds from East to West and at the same time from South to North. The most important places to be mentioned are Chonae in Asia Minor, Monte Gargano in Italy, Mont Saint-Michel in Normandy, and Michael's Mount in Cornwall. From the wealth of legends, we have chosen those connected with Chonae, Monte Gargano and Mont Saint-Michel.

Michael's Sanctuary in Chonae

The Holy Apostles Philippus and John the Theologian were the first to proclaim the healings, gifts, and deeds of mercy granted to us by God and performed through the Grace of Michael, our supreme leader. For after St. John had driven the impure Artemis out of Ephesus, he betook himself to St. Philippus, who dwelled in Hieropolis. Here Philippus was fighting against a serpent. The two greeted each other and St. Philippus said: "What shall we do, my brother John? I cannot drive this impure, foul serpent out of this city." This foul, pernicious serpent was the highest of its horrible brood. Its whole body was entwined by other serpents: One encircled its head, another its throat. It lay on two other serpents and round it writhed the whole impure brood, among which it stood like a queen. The Greeks, who considered her as a powerful goddess, worshipped her and brought her many sacrifices. And often, when St. Philippus was about to preach, the whole brood of snakes turned against the Saint and threatened to kill him.

And the serpent spake unto Philippus: "Go forth from this city, ere I slay thee." But St. Philippus proclaimed the word of truth and faith. And both Apostles, through their prayers, drove out the serpent from Hieropolis.

Then the holy proclaimers of truth went on and stopped at a place called Chairetopa (Place of Joy). Here were to be announced the mercy, the gifts, and the miracles of the holy and glorious supreme leader Michael. The two said a prayer and revealed to the people that the supreme leader of the might of the Lord would come hither and perform marvelous miracles. Then the Apostles went on and taught in another city. And where they had preached, a health-giving spring came forth from the ground.

But after the death of the holy Apostles, the Greeks began anew to rage against the Christians. Many years had passed since the holy spring had first been found. Then something unheard-of happened in the world. Whoever fled to this place was healed, no matter what sickness had befallen him. And many Greeks

came and saw the healings and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and took the baptism.

But there was a man in the City of Laodicea, who was godless and a worshipper of idols. He had one daughter who was dumb since birth. The father was told to betake himself to the place where that holy water sprang forth, for many of the Greeks went there and were healed of their sickness and came to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ. One night the man had a vision of the supreme leader Michael coming to him and saying: “Go forth with thy child to the place where the holy water comes forth. And I tell thee in My Name: If thou hast faith, thou wilt return without lament.”

And the man arose and went forth with his child. He beheld the mercy of God and believed and asked those who had been healed: “Unto whom do ye call when pouring the water on your body?”

And they answered: “We call unto the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the supreme leader Michael.”

Then the man raised his eyes and hands to Heaven and said: “Oh Divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, through the intercession of Michael, may ye help me, who am a sinner.” And he took water and poured it into his daughter’s mouth.

And she began to speak and said: “Oh Divinity of the Christians! Truly great is thy might, Oh Leader Michael!” And the man himself was baptized, and with him his whole family. And in honor of Michael, he built a small temple to protect the holy spring. Then he departed from the place together with his daughter and henceforth believed in God. But the Greeks still raged against the Christians and against the holy water, which they tried to extinguish.

Ninety years after the sanctuary had been built at the spring, a ten-year-old boy by the name of Archippus came there from Hieropolis. He was the son of pious Christians and appointed as the sanctuary’s guardian. His way of life was the following: During the sixty years which he served in the sanctuary, he partook of no bread nor meat nor wine. Neither did he take a bath. He nourished himself by cooking herbs and eating them without salt. This the holy man did once a week. But his precious soul he fructified thrice daily with the third of an ounce of water. This he did to refresh his body. His garment consisted of two coarse sacks. Alternately he wore one or the other sack. His bed was made of sharp stones, over which he had spread a coarse blanket, for he did not want his visitors to see the stones. Under his noble head he placed a sack full of thorns. Thus he rested when it was time to sleep. Every night he lay down on the stones and the thorns. And thus this servant of God spent bitter nights without sleep. But never did he fall ill. For he exercised his body and, with the help of the supreme leader Michael, preserved the soul from falling prey to error and snares.

For he walked on the narrow path, saying: “Oh Lord! Preserve me, the sinner, from rejoicing in this world. May the goods of this world never tempt

my eyes! May my eyes cling not for a single day to the follies of this life! But I pray Thee, Oh Lord, to fill my eyes with tears and illuminate my heart, so that I may recognize Thy wishes. And present me with a gift that I may present anew to those who are, since eternity, pleasant in Thy sight. For of what avail is my body made of dust, unless its filth and its adornment serve to develop the immortal soul? The soul's garment is faith in God; it is the slighting of the flesh: hunger, thirst, the asceticism of the angels, a hard bed, sleeplessness, sighing and penitence, loneliness and the giving of alms. All this pleases God and such is the adornment in which the soul rejoices. For what does the soul seek in the body? No thing but justice and a quiet mind. But what the body is seeking is gluttony, debauchery, greed, impurities of all kinds, malice, evil desires, and all that fails to please God. These are the desires in which the body rejoices and which imprison the ailing soul. What shall I, the harassed sinner, do? Help me, Oh Lord God! Make my body like unto a mustard seed. Nourish my heart, so that I may not be despised by Thee. For I am like unto grass, which flowers in the morning, but is withered when night falls. And yet will I not cease to extinguish all my evil thoughts and desires.”

Thus lamented Archippus, the servant of God. Every day he performed an angel's asceticism and glorified God, Who gave him such endurance. But Christians as well as Greeks flocked to this place. And all, calling unto the Trinity full of fear and faith, said: “Oh Divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit! Have Ye mercy upon us through the intercession of Michael, the leader of the Heavenly Hosts.” Then they poured the holy water on their ailments and were healed.

But the unbelievers and the enemies of truth did not want to behold the glory of God. They raged like lions, desiring to destroy the water and, at the same time, kill the servant of God. And the godless men often came to Archippus and scourged him. Others again robbed the Crosses of the Sanctuary and seized the Saint's head. Others again dragged him around by his hair. Others tore out his beard and threw the hair away. Some of the godless ran to the Holy Spring and tried to extinguish it. But suddenly it seemed as if their hands were paralyzed. Others saw how a flame blazed up from the water and singed their face. Thus the godless had to turn away in shame. And one said to the other: “If we do not destroy this water and kill its guardian, then our gods will be despised by all who have been healed here.” Thus they went on harassing God's servant every day. The Saint had to endure untold terrors at the hands of the Greek idolaters. But he was steadfast and glorified God by day and by night.

And at that place, a river called Chryses flowed down at the left side of the spring. In flowing down, it touched what had been God's sacrificial abode since the beginning of the world. Often the enemies of truth attempted to merge the river with the Holy Spring. But they failed to do so, although attempting it ever so often. For the river's water flowed away from the spring and separated into

two arms. And the arm that had separated turned away and streamed down at the right side of the Sanctuary. And thus it is still flowing today.

At that time, two other rivers coming from the East flowed so close to the Holy Spring that they were separated from it by only three miles. One of the rivers was called Lykokaper, and the other Kuphus. After uniting at the foot of a high mountain, they turned to the right and streamed down into Lykia. But the impure Devil, who has planted evil thoughts into the hearts of men since primeval times—God’s enemy who hates the angels, slays the Saints, and persecutes the God-fearing Churches; the devil who vitiates all remedies, tempts the weak, deceives the world, hates heaven as well as earth, and desires eternal darkness; the devil who works against those seeking salvation; the devil who hates beautiful things and has been hurled, as the Anti-Christ, into the darkness of the abyss—this devil did not cease to instigate the idolaters desiring to destroy God’s sanctuary. And thus he whispered to them that they should deflect the course of the rivers, so that the sanctuary would be flooded.

About five thousand of the godless men gathered and this army of the unjust came to Laocidia. Here they plotted deeds against Michael, the non-embodied leader of the Heavenly Hosts. The leader of the godless said to his men: “This place can be easily washed away, for the rivers fall down from enormous heights. Therefore let us deflect the course of the rivers. Archippus uses magic against our gods and despises their divine might. And this will go on as long as someone is healed at the spring. And even if we cannot slay Archippus and end his evil designs, yet the power of the rivers and the floods of water may, with the help of the gods, well destroy this place.”

Very close to the Holy Sanctuary was a hard rock of mighty breadth and expansion. Its depth could not be fathomed. This rock rose abruptly upward at a distance of about seventy yards. Now the godless enemies of truth began to dig up a trench for the water reaching from the foot of the rock to the foot of the high mountain where the rivers Kuphus and Lykokaper were flowing by. Thus they planned to deflect the rivers and destroy the Sanctuary of God. And it was Satan, the tempter of men, who instigated them to such a deed. They dug up the trench for the water and, within ten days, prepared everything for having the Holy Place washed away by the powerful floods. And, behold, the rivers were full of water and super-abundant floods were streaming down from the mountains.

But Archippus, the guardian and servant of God, knew of Satan’s wiles and the wicked designs of the idolaters. And he fell down on the ground as if he were dead, imploring God and Michael, the leader of the Heavenly Hosts, that they might preserve the Holy Place in this danger. This he did for ten days without eating and drinking or rising from the ground. He praised God and said: “God be praised! I shall not forsake this house and try to escape, but perish in the flood. For I trust in my God, Who will save me from faint-heartedness and from

the disaster. It will come to pass through the intercession of Michael, the non-embodied leader of the Heavenly Hosts, that this Holy Place and this abode will verily not be forsaken in all eternity.”

And when the ten days had passed, the godless proceeded to move the rivers against the leader of the Heavenly Hosts. And they said to one another: “Let us unleash the rivers and step aside, and witness the collapse of this place.” After deciding on this course, they unleashed the rivers at nightfall and fled, so that they themselves would not be engulfed by the waters. As had been planned, they went to the left side to look at the floods, gazed towards the South, and pointed out to each other the water plunging down from the height of the mountain. And suddenly they became frightened.

Archippus, the guardian and servant of God, lay in the Temple on his countenance and moistened the ground with his tears. Incessantly he called upon God. And, suddenly, he was raised up by the Holy Spirit. And he began to sing this psalm:

Oh Lord! The floods of the water are rising,
The floods of the water are roaring,
The floods of the water raise up the waves.
The ocean’s waves are mighty and fearful;
But the Lord on up high is greater.
May His Signs be mightily praised.
To Thy House, Oh Lord, is Holiness given in all eternity.

– Psalm 93

When he had ended the psalm, a clap of thunder roared out and the Holy Leader of the Heavenly Hosts himself appeared on the summit of the hard rock. And in a powerful voice, he said to the servant of God: “Servant, go forth from the Sanctuary, ere the waters swallow thee up.” The blessed man did as he was bidden. But when he beheld the fearful radiance of the Divinity, he fell down as if he were dead. And again, for the second time, called Michael, the leader of the Heavenly Hosts: “Rise, thou just soul, and come to me!”

Then answered the trembling Archippus, the servant of God: “Sir! I am not worthy to approach thee. See how I tremble before thy divinity.”

The mighty leader of the Heavenly Hosts said unto him: “Fear not and forget your fright and rise up from the ground.” Then awoke the blessed man. But he fled back into the Temple and crept tremblingly under the altar and wanted to save his soul. But Michael, the Holy Leader of the Heavenly Hosts, spake: “Take courage and come to me, lest the floods surge up against thee.”

And Archippus, the servant of God, answered: “I believe, Sir, that the power of the Lord and of Michael, His highest leader, be so great that they will not let this Holy Place be destroyed in all eternity.”

Then the leader of the Heavenly Hosts went forth from the Sanctuary, saying: "If thou believest, Oh Saintly man, that God is able to save this place from the water, come hither and behold His might." Then the servant of God went forth from the Temple and walked to the left. And he heard Michael's voice and beheld the might of his glory, rising up from earth towards heaven like unto a pillar of fire. And Michael, the leader of the Heavenly Hosts, spake: "Dost thou know who I am, since thou tremblest before my divinity?"

Then answered Archippus: "Sir, I do not know thee."

And the mighty leader said: "I am Michael, leading the Lord's Heavenly Hosts. I am the one standing before God's Countenance, the one who may barely behold the fearful, inscrutable radiance revealing the Godhead and the unbearable, blazing flames of His immeasurable might. And thou canst not endure even my divine radiance, but tremblest before the figure and might of God's servant. How should the mortals behold God, before Whom I stand only amidst fear and trembling?" And again the leader of the Heavenly Hosts said unto Archippus: "Dost thou see the water plunge down from the heights of the mountain?"

And Archippus answered: "No, Sir! But my ears can hear the water's fearful roaring."

Then spake the leader of the Heavenly Hosts: "Fear not, but remain standing." And, behold, the water plunging down from the heights came close to Michael's and Archippus' countenance. Then raised the leader of the Heavenly Hosts his voice and spake to the rivers: "Against whom are ye raging, Kuphus and Lykokaper? Who has tempted you to leave your beds and come hither?" And after these words, he made a sign towards the water's countenance and said: "Stand still at this place." And the rivers stood still at once; and the water rose to the height of ten fathoms. Then said the leader of the Heavenly Hosts unto Archippus, the servant of God: "Dost thou, Oh Saint, behold the might of God?"

And Archippus answered: "Verily, I see it, Sir."

And the leader of the Hosts said: "Fear not the threat of the water." And like unto Moses, who stretched forth his hand in the Red Sea and divided the ocean with his staff, so the mighty leader Michael stretched forth his right hand, as if he were holding a staff and struck with it the summit of the hard rock. And the hard rock burst at once from its summit to its foot. The roaring of the bursting rock was like unto thunder. And the whole earth near that place trembled. And the leader of the Hosts said unto the servant of God: "Oh, Saint! Dost thou behold the might of God?"

Archippus said: "Sir, I behold the miracle and might of God, Who is working with thee."

And Michael again stretched forth his hand and made a sign over the abyss and blessed it, saying: "Within this abode shall be abolished every illness and every evil, every kind of poison, every kind of magic incantation, and every work

of the adversary. Here men shall be liberated from their chains and those healed who are possessed by impure spirits. Whoever comes hither and, in reverence and faith, calls unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and the leader Michael, shall not depart in sorrow. And God's mercy and my might shall overshadow this abode and sanctify it in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. But our enemies, who stand there gazing at us, shall be turned into stone until the time when the rivers will wash away my Sanctuary and carry it to the ocean."

And then Michael said unto Archippus, the servant of God: "Oh, Saint! Go forth to my right side." Archippus did as he was bidden. Then the leader of the Hosts raised his voice, saying: "Oh, ye rivers! Throw yourselves into this abyss and unite therein for all eternity, instead of turning against me anew." And thus the renown of this Holy Place will last eternally through the might of Jesus Christ, our Lord, Whom it is meet to glorify and worship from eternity to eternity. Amen!

– From the Greek

The Sanctuary of Michael on Mount Gargano

There was a city in Italy which was called Sepaus. And in it lived a rich man whose name was Garganus. And there was a mountain near the city, which had received the name of Mount Garganus after the rich man. Now the rich man had lost a heifer and looked for it everywhere. Finally he found the heifer in front of a hollow and said: "I will repay thee for running away." And he shot off an arrow and wanted to slay the heifer. But the arrow turned back and entered into the rich man. So he went home and told the Bishop what had happened.

Then said the Bishop: "Thou must know that God turned the arrow back. Therefore we must ask Him to tell us His purpose." And the Bishop commanded the people to fast and pray for three days, so that God might reveal unto them why the rich man had been wounded.

And after three days St. Michael came to the Bishop, saying: "I am St. Michael, the angel of God. And I stand always before God and have my abode on the Mountain. Then came Garganus and wanted to desecrate the city. That I did not want to permit him. For I want to guard the city, so that no sacrilege may be committed." And then the angel vanished. In the morning the Bishop sent for the priests and all of them went piously up on the mountain. But no one was allowed to enter the cavern. And they prayed to God full of devotion.

In those days, many pagans came to the land of the Bishop. He was sorely beset and called unto God that He might save the people from the might of the pagans. Then came St. Michael to the Bishop, saying: "I shall intercede in the fighting, and help the Christians, and bring great tribulations on the heathen, so that many of them shall die. And ye shall begin the battle at noon." Then vanished St. Michael.

And the Bishop told unto the Christians what the angel had said. And they rejoiced and prepared for the struggle. And at noon a terrifying tempest arose and many stones fell on the heathen. And many heathen were sorely hurt and died. Thus the Christians vanquished the heathen with the help of God and beloved St. Michael. And they rejoiced exceedingly and brought sacrifices in honor of St. Michael and went to the cavern. And there they saw the footprints made by St. Michael in the stone. And they knew forthwith that the place belonged to St. Michael and they thanked him for his merciful help. But they were not allowed to enter the cavern. Therefore they built a church nearby in honor of St. Michael.

Then the Bishop journeyed to Rome and told unto the Pope what had happened, saying: "I know not whether or not I should consecrate the cavern."

Then spake the Pope: "Let us ask God." And he commanded that the people should fast for three days.

Then came St. Michael to the Bishop in his sleep, saying: "I myself have consecrated the cavern. Thou shalt see it tomorrow and say Mass therein. And thou shalt see that I myself will be there to console you." Early in the morning, the Bishop came to the mountain. And a multitude of people was with him. There they found a chapel that was sunk halfway into a hard, hollow rock. And a path led therein. And when the people entered, they saw the altar was clothed with rich purple stuff. And a radiant light shone out of the chapel. And the Bishop performed the services full of devotion. Then the people went home. And the Bishop consecrated priests to perform the services in the church. When night fell, the door of the chapel was locked by itself and no one was allowed to enter therein all night long. And there was a stone in the church wherefrom flowed a miraculous water healing the sick.

Once on a time, Emperor Henry came to the city and went into the chapel of St. Michael and prayed to God. And now the time was come when the hosts of the angels were to appear and say Mass. And the people were driven out of the cavern. Then the Emperor asked that he might be permitted to stay therein. And his demand was granted. And he remained alone through the might of the Almighty and called unto God full of devotion. And God opened the Emperor's eyes so that he beheld the hosts of angels coming to the mountain. And above all, there were two angels who gleamed like the red of the morning and were exceeding fair and prepared the altar most beauteously. Then came a multitude of angels leading St. Michael. And he radiated more luminously than the sun. Then came our Lord Jesus Christ, a mighty God. And He was surrounded by a multitude of angels and clothed in such beauty as befitted His splendor. And He performed the services full of piety and dignity. And one of the angels took the book and carried it for our Lord Jesus Christ and bowed down before Him. And our Lord Jesus Christ kissed the book and beckoned with His hand to the angel and pointed to Emperor Henry who was lying there and praying. And the angel

with the book stood before the Emperor. But the Emperor was sore afraid and said that he was not worthy to kiss the book. Then the angel took hold of his hip, saying: "Emperor, rise up and accept the Grace that God has bestowed on thee." Then rose the Emperor and kissed the book that the angel held out to him. And thus the Emperor lost his hip. But through the Will of God, he suffered it gladly.

– Latin Legend

Mont Saint-Michel

Once on a time Aubert, a pious Bishop beloved by God, had fallen asleep. Then appeared an angel unto him and commanded him to build a church, in honor of the Archangel Michael, on Mount Tumba. Thus St. Michael's name would be consecrated not only on Mount Gargano, but also in the midst of the sea. And while the Bishop pondered the words of the Apostle: "Test the spirits, whether they are sent by God" (John 4,1), the angel came anew and commanded the Bishop to do what had been ordered. The Bishop, who was still doubtful, implored our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Archangel Michael to reveal their will unto him.

At that time it happened that a man had hidden a bull on the summit of the mountain. He had stolen the bull and hoped to reap profit from this theft, as soon as the animal's owner would have forgotten his loss. Meanwhile the venerable Bishop was admonished for the third time most urgently to give up his disobedience and hurry to the place and leave it not ere the work had been concluded. When the Bishop asked which site was the best for the building, this answer came out of the angel's mouth: "There where he would find a bull tied to a stake." And when the Bishop asked how large should be the site, the angel answered: "As large as the place uprooted by the bull." The angel also said that the bull should be returned to its rightful owner.

Now the venerable Bishop went forth to the place, singing sacred songs and praising God. For now he was certain that it was God's messenger who had come to him. Gathering a multitude of peasants, he let them clean up the site and level the ground. But in the middle of the site there arose two mighty rocks, which could not be moved even by the strongest men. By this they were delayed for a long time and no one knew what to do. In the following night, a peasant from the village of Itius, by the name of Bain, had a vision. He was commanded in his dream to join the laborers. Immediately he and his twelve sons went forth to the place that had been designated. After arriving thereat, he accomplished with Michael's help what no mortal man could have done: In a miraculous way, Bain pushed the rock aside. It seemed that, in spite of its size, the rock had no weight.

All of them praised God and the Archangel Michael who had given them courage to begin the work anew. And when the Bishop pondered how large the Church should be, dew fell on the mountain's summit in the middle of the night, just as it had fallen down in the time of Gideon as a sign of victory. But there, where the walls should be erected, the ground remained dry. And the Bishop heard a voice, saying: "Go forth and place the stones as it has been shown unto thee." And the Bishop arose, praised the Almighty, and joyously went to work blessed by St. Michael, whose help he had implored.

– French Legend

Mont Saint-Michel

In the middle of the 15th century, especially round the year 1457, pilgrims from the East and West, including many children from Germany, wandered to Mont Saint-Michel. And old chronicles give the following account of these pilgrimages:

"Here it is written what large companies of men and boys gathered in Italy and Germany to make pilgrimages to St. Michael. Thus in the year 1457 after the birth of Christ, there gathered a great company of men, boys, and children in the German and Italian countries. And a hundred, a hundred-fifty, or two hundred, as the case may be, fashioned a banner. And on one side they put the sign of the cities they came from. On the other side, they put a picture of St. Michael. And when they walked through cities or villages, the banner was borne before them. And they walked in pairs of two, the youngest at the head. And each had a staff in his hand and sang:

"In the Name of God walk we,
To St. Michael go we."

"Thus, around Christmas time, thirteen banners passed through the City of Speyer. Each company numbered about three hundred, most of whom were country folk and young boys. And it was the coldest winter that had plagued the country for the last twenty years. When the pilgrims were asked whereto they were wandering, they answered: "To St. Michael!" The same year, many other companies came, all wandering to Brittany to St. Michael's sanctuary. This is an abbey lying on the shore of the ocean. And the ocean ebbs every day, so that the ground becomes dry. And so the people could walk dry-shod to the church, each company with its banner. And they stuck their banners in the ground and went into the church and got their indulgences. And here they were shown St. Michael's sword, which has barely the length of an arm, and his shield, which was also small and rusty and had five stars placed thereon."

– Chronicle of the City of Speyer