

Michael and the Mystery of Golgotha

Golgotha

On the field of Golgotha, nailed to the Cross, spreading out the arms, the hands full of blood and wounds, there hung the Christ on the Holy Cross in the earth's center, Christ raising up by Himself the work of His Divine Hands: This world of four measurements—consisting of length, of breadth, of height, of depth. The angels ascended and descended between heaven and earth. They gathered into a single community. The forces of Heaven bow down before His voluntary suffering.

Praised be Thy Patience, O Lord!

The heavenly powers in their ninefold order—Angels, Archangels, Archai, Dynameis, Kyriotetes, Principalities, Thrones, Cherubim, Seraphim—stood before Him, before the Throne of Glory, descending and ascending in their given order. And the dead rose from the graves, came nigh to the Cross, forsaking their death-bed, bowed down before His suffering that heals the world.

Praised be Thy Patience, O Lord!

There died the two thieves nailed to the Cross. Saphet and Themech died under the torture of the Cross, died in the din faintness of death. Their thoughts died, their shattered and guilt-laden minds faded away; darkness blinded the eyes.

Praised be Thy Patience, O Lord!

The eyes of the senses and darkness blinded the eyes of the spirit. Their hearts went out in prayer: O Lord, have mercy upon us the fallen. Raising crosswise her arms to the Son Who hangs on the Cross with outspread arms, the Holy Mother of God sinks down at the Holy Cross. The sword of sorrow has pierced her heart. Her heart is baptized with the baptismal of tears. Torn is her heart, torn to its depth. All her tears have been shed, and dry are her eyes.

O Heavenly King, My Son!

Three stars like unto the candles of God radiate out of the darkness. They ray out of the Virgin Mother, who did give the inconceivable, wondrous, inscrutable birth to the world's Light and Savior.

Praised be Thy Patience, O Lord!

At the rising of the sun there open up twelve gates, twelve others in the West, twelve on the ocean. From all the paths from the upper and lower abodes of Heaven there come the heavenly powers gathering in front of the Cross. Two angels brought in an old man, supporting him under the arms, venerable, frail Adam, the First-Born, and led him before the Countenance of the Lord.

Christ hangs on the Cross. His head has sunk down. Worshipped is He by all the nations, illuminating and forgiving the sins of those who by their faith have ascended to Heaven. Bitter gall was He given to drink, the One and Primeval He Who is the Eternal without beginning nor end.

And there sounded a Voice from the Cross: "For thy sake and thy children's sake, am I come down to earth, have I descended from Heaven to the Cross, have been nailed to the Cross. On this day I fulfill the Covenant and forgive thy trespasses!" And Adam sighed: "Thus it has been Thy Will. Thus it has been Thy Will, O Lord, my God!"

Praised be Thy Patience, O Lord!

The angels, the heavenly hosts were rejoicing, praising before Adam the Christ Who redeems through his blood the sin of the first-born. Past are the dark nights, vanished is the grief, and from the Cross ascended the angels, in fear and joy, upward to the Heaven of Heavens, to the Throne of Glory, praising the Christ before the Heavenly Father!

Praised be Thy Patience, O Lord!

The heavenly hosts, all the nine rank — Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Principalities, Kyriotetes, Dynameis, Archai, Archangels, Angels — ascended to the Throne of God praising the Divine Suffering. And one of the angels in the holy circle, he who beheld more than the others of wondrous countenance, stood before the Cross, immovable, looking silently at the Christ. How could it be?

Praised be Thy Patience, O Lord!

The Son of God, the beloved Son, the Brother, the Creator of earth and heaven is sold for thirty pieces of silver and hangs on the Cross! He is suffering, covered with blood from head to foot. No one is helping. Forsaken is He. No one protects Him, innocent does he hang on the Cross! The angel saw naught but the Christ; only at Christ did the angel gaze. Endure it he could not. Tortured, he presses together his fingers. Smoke, like unto blue rings of incense is wafted upward between his pointed wrists. White shimmers the spear in his hand, shimmers above the smoldering shaft. And the tempestuous wings, blue like the lightning, rustle angrily like an eagle's wings. Immovable, silent, he cannot and

will not behold the Christ on the Cross. All the heavenly hosts looked at one another full of wonder. They ask the angel to ascend to the Throne of Glory to praise the Son before the Father! His heart was glowing. A single thought was flaming up out of his burning heart. He alone can and will and must rise up to protect the Christ. He can castigate the cities and villages, the fields the hills and forests. He will destroy the whole world, extinguish the crown of the sun to expiate for the Cross and the torment.

Praised be Thy Patience, O Lord!

Alone, immovable, unshaken, silent there flamed before the Cross the grim avenger, the loftiest angel, the victor over the enemies, the Archangel Michael. In the snow-white, boiling whirlpool, there ascended the heavenly hosts from the Cross to the throne above the garland of stars, chanting songs of praise. And the Christ commanded the angel to ascend to heaven to relinquish the Cross.

Fulfill the Law!

But the angel stood faithfully before the Cross and would not leave it: Thou seest, O Lord, that I cannot endure Thy crucifixion! And God commanded the angel anew to leave the Cross.

Fulfill the Law!

But the angel moved not; unshaken, firm, inflexible, faithful did he stand before the Cross: How can I go, O Lord? And for the third time there came a voice from the Cross, commanding the angel to ascend to Heaven.

Fulfill the Law!

And shadows, hearkening to the spirit, were quivering above the pallid head. Trembling, the angel took one step away from the Cross. There he stood and turned around. Dark shadows whirled across the white forehead, the tempestuous wings were beating like unto those of an eagle, and the eyes were blue and deep like unto an abyss in the forest: To see this torment, to have power for alleviating it and not be permitted to do so! Demand it not, O Lord, demand it not! Thou seest my flaming heart, Thou knowest my love, it has no boundaries, it follows no command. Wherefore do I have power if thou forbiddest me to end Thy torment? Thy Law, Thy Word, Thy Will I cannot resist—but my love I cannot quench!

Praised be Thy Patience, O Lord!

And so great was the fire of love, so bitter was the torment, so immeasurable the suffering all the thoughts, all the paths of the heart were blazing. The angel could not surrender, could not fulfill God's Commandment. He opened his hand. Softly the flame glided out of it and the flame was blue hot vivid. And the fire scorched and burned. Gray turned the darkness. The seven circles of Heaven drew themselves together, and the circles of earth were trembling.

In the roaring of the fourfold divided, fearful trombones of mourning, there arose the four winds from the four corners of the copper-hued sky. Rustling they came from East and West, from North to South. Who shows the way unto them? Where to do they blow? They cannot rest. In frenzy, they churn up the sea, which billows up and threatens to drown the whole earth. And the pillars of hell are trembling.

But in the thunder's roaring and moaning, the suffering becomes ever sharper. The ire finds no outlet, and the angel hurls the spear into the darkness of earth where fear is hiding, where there dwells slander and persecution, where the loss is mourned, where the tortured heart beats in vain where the useless compassion is dissolving, where the sheath of protection is decaying. The spear, tearing asunder the darkness like lightning, strikes the Temple, severs the cupola, shatters the forecourt, breaks up the walls into two parts, rents in two the curtain of the Temple. Thus does the angel testify before mankind, so that it should know and see the torment and the Cross.

And at the same hour the Christ called out, praising the Father God and God's inborn son gave up the spirit. And the great angel of light, the Word of God, overcame death in dying.

Praised be Thy Patience
Praised be Thy Torment
Praised be Thy Power,
O Lord God!

– Russian Legend

Michael and the Risen One

Michael: Rise up, Oh Lord, the Child of God,
To Whom so humbly we submit.
Rise up, Thou Comforter Divine,
Who cleanseest us from every guilt.
Now will be perfect every thing
Since Thy new body was prepared
In place of that which was Thy sheath,
Since Light of Heaven round Thee flows.
Rise up, Oh Lord, we pray of Thee
Who want to serve Thee at all times,
Rise up, Oh Lord, and leave the grave,
Thou Who to all men bringeth joy!
Show Thee in all Thy holiness
That filleth Thy entire grave!
Rise up, Who art both Man and God,
Henceforth Thou wilt be ever spared
All torment, suffering, and all grief.
Rise up from wounds and pain
And shed Thy light on all thy chosen ones.
Jesus: Now have been fulfilled all things
That were eternally prepared:
That I should die a bitter death
To give to mankind back the Grace.
And thus have I arisen now
And will redeem Adam and Eve
And all the ones beloved by Me,
That to the Joy they will be born
Which they through Lucifer have lost.

– From the Rejentine Easter Play, 15th century