

Good Morning! Because we are celebrating Michaelmas, I thought I would share some history about St. Michael himself and then history about our parish. First, according to Wikipedia where all answers are found:

St. Michael is the chief of the angels and archangels, and he is the guardian prince of Israel and is responsible for the care of Israel. It is said that Michael rescued Abraham from the furnace into which he had been thrown by Nimrod. Michael is believed to be the angel that prevented Isaac from sacrifice by his father by substituting a ram in his place.

In the Christian church, Saint Michael has four main roles or offices. His first role is the leader of the Army of God and the leader of heaven's forces in their triumph over the powers of hell. He is viewed as the angelic model for the virtues of the "spiritual warrior", his conflict with evil taken as "the battle within". The second and third roles of Michael deal with death. In his second role, he is the angel of death, carrying the souls of

Christians to heaven. In this role he descends at the hour of death, and gives each soul the chance to redeem itself before passing; thus consternating the devil and his minions. Catholic prayers often refer to this role of Michael. In his third role, he weighs souls on his perfectly balanced scales. For this reason, he is often depicted holding scales. Finally, in his fourth role, Saint Michael, the special patron of the Chosen People in the Old Testament, is also the guardian of the church.

As we know from the iconography around this church including this beautiful carving in the Nave, Michael was a warrior who conquered that evil snake, Satan.

Well, now that we know about the namesake for our church who we celebrate on this Michaelmas, let's look at the history of our parish. St. Michael's was started in January of 1976 which means we are coming up on our 48th year of existence. St. Michael's grew from a house church of 40 families meeting in the recreation center of the Westwood Apartment Complex in January

1976 to owning a church building and celebrating their first service in their church on Easter of 1976 on April 18, 1976, with 143 people in attendance. What an exciting and growth filled time that was. And, things didn't slow down. By July of 1980 ground was broken on the land where we now meet to build the church we know and love. On November 6, 1980, only four years after being a house church, St. Michael's formally became a parish, with Wallis Ohl as our first Priest. Of course, we all know him as our beloved Bishop Ohl who has retired here and continues to be a blessing to this Parish. In July of 1981, St. Michael's new church building was dedicated and consecrated with full fanfare, bagpipes and drums. This was followed by a week of festivities. By the end of 1981 St. Michael's had a total communicant strength of 243.

From the very beginning, St. Michael's took on the mantle of the original Michael, by working to slay injustice whenever we found it. An early example of this was when we sponsored a

refugee family from Vietnam in 1979. We were not yet a parish but we wanted to ensure that a family was able to come to our community to live in freedom and safety. St. Michael's continued in outreach in 1983 by entering into a relationship with St. James, a parish in West Ankole, Uganda. We were true companion parishes and part of VOOM (Volunteer Oklahoma Outreach Mission) and the Diocesan relationship with Anglicans in Uganda. In 1990, St. Michael's supported a new Hispanic mission in Oklahoma City and members served on the first Hispanic Commission. Santa Maria Virgen continues to be a flourishing parish today. Finally, we come to today where we are still helping with refugee resettlement with the Norman Coalition for Refugees. Helping the foreigner has not been St. Michael's only focus but outreach to all has been a major focus. You can still see that work throughout the parish as we bring things for Sharon's wagon, help with Laundry Love or walk in the CROP walk which we will soon be doing.

What does our history and our Saint tell us about St. Michael's and how we are to move on from here? Well, our history shows that we are an active and energetic community who truly wants to help others. If we are to act like our patron, we will continue to work to fight injustice wherever we find it. Like we do by providing monthly meals to our unhoused neighbors. St. Michael's may be small but we are mighty. But, we cannot do this alone. We need more people to become part of our community. But, how do we get people here? What do we have to offer them? What does God have to offer them? According to the Episcopal Church website: God offers them complete Love with no exceptions. The Episcopal Church offers a legacy of inclusion, aspiring to tell and exemplify God's love for every human being. So, we have a lot to offer. We have got to share the fact of God's love with all people we encounter. If you have listened to any of my sermons, you know what I am going to bring up next. The Baptismal Covenant. Are we doing the things necessary to live into our Baptism?

Here are the five things we agree to do when we reaffirm our Baptismal Covenant:

First, we agree to continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers. We, at St. Michael's, work to do this. We meet for Eucharist weekly, continue with fellowship and prayers. What more can we do? Who can we invite to join us? How can we share this meal which means so much to us with others?

Second, we agree to persevere in resisting evil, and whenever we fall into sin we will repent and return to the Lord. This is a rather personal covenant that I hope we are all able to keep. For me, knowing when I have messed up and repenting that sin and returning to the Lord is a graceful and loving experience and I hope it is for you, as well. Let's always work on doing this.

Third, we agree to proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ. Well, I have just gone from preaching and

moved to meddling as I tell you that we have got to share about God's love and grace with all whom we encounter. As I've said before and will say again, we don't have to knock on doors and ask people if they have a plan for the afterlife or have heard of the plan of salvation. But, we can share our faith with those with whom we live and work and share our lives. As always, I am going to encourage you to invite someone you know to an activity or group here at St. Michael's—the Wild Men, Saucy Sisters or the Arts & Crafts group on Wednesday nights. Let them come and see what St. Michael's has to offer them.

Fourth, we agree to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself. Whew. This is a toughie. I mean I don't always love myself, how can God really expect me to love anyone else, especially that guy who is driving in front of me who has had his blinker on for three miles. Really? But, that is what God really wants us to do and exactly what we must be about doing. I've listed our many areas of outreach where we do this so

well and I am glad we do. I pray that we have the ability and capacity to keep helping others and loving our neighbors and loving ourselves.

Finally, we do the thing that you may have seen on St. Michael's tee shirts. We agree to strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being. Every human being. Not just the human beings we know or like or have a fun time being around but every one of them.

Wow, we agree to a lot, don't we? How can we do all of this? Well we do it with how we respond to each of these questions during our baptism "I will (do this incredibly hard thing), with God's help" because that is, after all, the only way we will every be able to do all of this heavy lifting. With God's help.

So, soon I will send you out to go in peace to love and serve the Lord, and when I do what I'm really saying is the following:

"Happy Michaelmas! Keep up the Good Work and go out and live into your baptismal covenant!" Amen.