

## PASTOR'S COLUMN

*St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle!*

A few weeks after I arrived here in August, some parishioners requested that I institute the “St. Michael the Archangel Prayer” at the end of Masses at St. Francis. According to Scripture and Church Tradition, St. Michael is God’s lead angel in the fight against evil and demons. I personally have prayed this prayer for years, but I resisted the idea of adding a prayer to the Mass so early on in my pastorate. The requests to add this prayer at the end of Mass have been steady during my almost four months here.

By way of background, Pope Leo XIII composed the St. Michael Prayer in 1884 for recitation at all “low” Masses to protect the Holy See from the loss of its sovereign rights. After the Vatican State was created and the Church’s sovereignty guaranteed, Pope Pius XI in 1929 adapted the prayer for the cause of converting Russia from Communism. In 1964, the Second Vatican Council suppressed praying the St Michael prayer at Mass. In 1994, Pope St. John Paul II invited the faithful to pray the prayer as a valued devotion, though not at Mass. In September of this year, Pope Francis asked the faithful to pray the prayer at the end of the rosary for healing of victims of clergy sexual abuse and purification of the clergy. Since then, a number of U.S. bishops have asked their priests to add this prayer to the end of Mass.

I have continued to hear from parishioners that St. Francis is the only parish in the area that isn’t praying the St. Michael Prayer at Mass. I decided to verify that with the pastors who serve in Catholic parishes in Metairie, Kenner, Harahan and River Ridge at a recent meeting of the East Jefferson Deanery. I learned that, indeed, the prayer is prayed at most other area churches, primarily at the weekday Mass, but in a few places at weekend Masses too.

After consultation and reflection, I have decided to add the St. Michael prayer at the end of weekday Masses beginning the first Monday of Advent, December 3 (the Feast of St. Francis Xavier). I will evaluate how this goes in the coming months. I expect there will be a divergence of opinion about this decision, but hopefully nobody will take serious offense at praying for divine protection from the evils present in our world. Here is the text of the St. Michael prayer which we will use:

**St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do Thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.**

God bless,

Fr. Joe