

## Rare Procession of Sword of St. Michael

On Palm Sunday , in the small Apulian town of Monte Sant'Angelo, which houses the sanctuary of San Michele Arcangelo, a pilgrimage destination for centuries, an event of great impact took place both in terms of faith and history: the blessing of the city, of Italy and of the world against the Coronavirus with the sword of the one who is called the "supreme head of the celestial army", together with the Blessed Sacrament and a relic of the Holy Cross, a gift from Frederick II returning from Crusade of 1228. Historically, to find a similar event it is necessary to go back almost 400 years, to 1656, when the plea with the sword of San Michele had arisen against the spread of the plague on the occasion of the fourth appearance of the Archangel on Monte Gargano, by then bishop Giovanni Alfonso Puccinelli. Usually, in fact, the sword is extracted from the display case and carried in procession only on September 29, the day on which the Feast of San Michele and the Archangels Gabriele and Raffaele occurs.

In introducing the celebration, which took place behind closed doors but which recorded thousands of streaming connections, the rector from the Shrine, Father Ladislao Sucky, flanked by two other Michelite fathers, he said: «May Jesus Christ be praised. Dear ones, we live this difficult moment not only for our city, but for all of Italy and for the whole world. So tonight, we want to invoke Archangel Michael, who chose this place, which in the Old Testament was the guide and defender of the people of God, and wanted to bless, defend and entrust the holy people of God to this sacred mountain, the holy church. Today we want to invoke him because as in the past, in the various moments of trial, of natural disasters, even of plague, our fathers in this place have invoked him and have always found his help. His intercession brought in the plague period in 1656 a prodigious salvation for Monte Sant'Angelo. Today we invoke through his intercession the Lord to save not only Monte Sant'Angelo, but all Italy, all Gargano, all the world from this epidemic. Afterwards, the Mayor of the city, Pierpaolo d'Arienzo, took the floor and, wearing the tricolor and speaking on behalf of all his fellow citizens, he raised words full of faith and hope: «Archangel Michael, is a city that kneel before you through my knees; it is a city that looks up to you through my eyes; it is a city that prays to you today through my voice. Just as in 1656, even today we have crossed the iron gate, crossed the stone courtyard, and descended the 86 steps, looking for them in the heart of the Sacred Mountain. Accept this prayer of ours, defend with your sword our city, our country from this pandemic. Protect this people today as then. Give him the strength to stay united in the face of this terrible emergency. Protect those women and men who took Italy in their arms by trying to ferry it across the tunnel. We implore you Archangel Michael to give us the strength to build a norm in which health care counts more than weapons, workers' guarantees count more than profit, the family, that is, the people with whom we have decided to share our life, whatever age they have, count most of all. May this prayer of ours be a song that goes straight to God ». A great Saint of the Catholic Church, Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, used to say: "Before going here with me ... go to Monte Sant'Angelo and invoke the help and protection of the Archangel Michael". Here, following this advice, in this trial period due to the Coronavirus, everyone can start - or resume! - to recite daily the prayer to St. Michael the Archangel composed by Pope Leo XIII, following a vision he had on 13 October 1884 regarding a terrible battle between the Church and Satan:

### Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel

St. Michael the Archangel,  
defend us in battle.  
Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil.  
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray,  
and do thou,  
O Prince of the heavenly hosts,  
by the power of God,  
thrust into hell Satan,  
and all the evil spirits,  
who prowl about the world  
seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.