



Reflection for September 30, 2020  
The Feast of Michael & All Angels [transferred]  
Patron saint of police officers, firefighters, paramedics  
and the military.

*Remember, I am with you and will watch over you  
wherever you go.* [Genesis 28.15]

*“How do you know anything about me?”*

[John 1:48]

The archangel Michael is traditionally the patron saint of police officers, firefighters, paramedics, and the military. At this time, especially, these professionals are among the most misunderstood in our nation, while at the same time facing particularly serious moral and physical dangers. We pray for their wellbeing in gratitude for their service, and we also pray for the grace to recognize the complexity of their roles and to hold them accountable both compassionately and justly.

The story of Nathaniel’s encounter with Jesus helps us to see how to do this. His question to Jesus might be the question that any law enforcement officer might ask us:

*“How do you know anything about me?”*

The story of Nathanael is the story of a faithful Jew who knew the stories his ancestors had told about the coming of a Messiah but who had pre-set ideas about what that Messiah would look like and where he would be from. *Can anything good come out of Nazareth?* he asks when he is told that Jesus is the Messiah (in a passage that comes just before the passage we hear today).

Nathanael is converted by the wondrous experience of being known for who he is. He is set free because Jesus sees him for who he is—as someone who is “sincere”—that is, someone who is whole and consistent—when he had felt confused and conflicted. Nathanael is converted because he allows himself to be known for who he is. This enables him to see Jesus with the eyes of his imagination and faith, rather than relying on the word of other people.

*“How do you know anything about me?”*

We usually ask this question as a way of protecting ourselves. It is a way of pointing out to someone that there is much they *don’t* know about us. To ask this question is often an act of defiance, or resistance. It is another way of saying – *You don’t know something essential about me!* At the same time, though, each of us does long to be known-as Nathanael was known-as someone who is “sincere”—whole and consistent—even when we feel confused or conflicted.

Deciding how and when we want to *be known* is a challenge that we all face in living meaningful, faithful lives.

There are only two things we really need to know—

We need to know ourselves-- our demons and our angels—

And we need to know the promise that God has made over and over again

the promise that God made to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, to the Prophets,

the promise that he revealed in Christ

and that he keeps today:

the promise we read today in the story of Jacob:

***Remember, I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go.*** [Genesis 28.15]

This is the challenge:

***“How do you know anything about me?”***

This is the promise—

***Remember, I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go.***

AMEN