



Michaelmas

At autumn time, as the life forces of nature recede, turning toward a winter sleep, the inner life of the human soul is awakening. It is a time of conscious selfhood, a time when we celebrate the building and strengthening of our inner life. In many cultures, the autumn time marks the beginning of a new year. The forces of nature are transiting with the autumnal equinox, as the relationship of light and darkness changes in the world around us.

The Equinox is for us a turning point, a change in the relationship of the light and darkness in the world around us. On September 29th, the autumn festival traditionally known as Michaelmas is celebrated. The Festival is named for the Archangel Michael, the conqueror of the powers of darkness, the harvester of the deeds of human souls. It is at this time the image of Michael with the dragon appears before us as a mighty imagination, challenging us to develop strong, brave, free wills, to overcome love of ease, anxiety and fear. This demands inner activity, a renewal of the soul, which is brought to consciousness in the Michaelmas festival, the festival of the will.

Michael is often portrayed as the angel warrior, astride his powerful steed carrying a sword of light. The children hear stories about St. George, A brave Knight who with help of the Archangel Michael, slays or tames the dragon. Michael is the Angel who hurled Lucifer down from heaven for his evil workings against God. St. Michael, warrior of courage, fighter against evil, rules the heavenly spheres; he guides and inspires us to take courage against darkness. St. George symbolizes the human aspects of this conflict; he is the knight who looks to Michael for strength and guidance.

These images truly symbolize the challenges we face in the autumn season. They speak to our deep need to carry an inner light of wisdom and courage at this time when the light is diminishing. Though the strength of will, inner activity of selfless times; the anti-social forces are emerging everywhere. May we gain insight, courage and truth at this Michaelmas time, to bring light to our inner life, our community and the world in these times of darkness.

From *Waldorf Education: A Family Guide*, by Pamela Johnson Fenner and Karen L. Rivers