

Why do Waldorf Schools have Michaelmas-Festival of Courage?

The Festivals Committee has realized that many of the parents at WSB ask this question. In response, we offer the following as a window to deeper understanding.

MICHAELMAS -- THE FESTIVAL OF COURAGE

...We live in a time of hard tests for humanity, of hard tests which must become still harder. We live in a time in which a whole host of old forms of civilization to which humankind still erroneously clings, are sinking into the abyss, a time in which the claim insistently arises that we must find our way to something new.

Rudolf Steiner

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 the world around us.

The equinox is for us a turning point, a change in the relation of light and darkness in the world around us. On September 29th the autumn festival traditionally known as Michaelmas is celebrated. This festival is named for the Archangel Michael, conqueror of the powers of darkness, the harvester of the deeds of human souls. It is at this time that 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, the festival of courage.

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 the 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. Archangel 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 aspect of this conflict; he is the knight who looks to Michael for strength and guidance.

These images truly symbolize the challenge 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. Through strength of will, inner activity of selfless consciousness, we bring light to the darkening time. These are very challenging 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.

I rise through the strength of Mi-cha-el

Light of Sun

Radiance of Moon

Splendor of Fire

Swiftiness of Wind

Depth of Sea

Stability of Earth

Firmness of Rock.

Mi-cha-el!

St. Patrick