

## MICHAELMAS

Michaelmas is not a widely known festival, yet its significance is powerful. Our school celebrates Michaelmas one evening in early Fall, when parents and children gather at school for a picnic and other activities including a play or story. The 'official' day of Michaelmas is September 29.

The celebration of Michaelmas commemorates the Archangel Michael, and the archetype Michael represents. In the Old Testament, Daniel named Michael as leader and guide of the Israelites. In the Book of Revelations, Michael battles the dragon. And this archetype has appeared in the mythology of many cultures over many centuries. Ancient Indian myth speaks of Indra. The Bhagavad Gita tells of Mithra. The ancient Babylonians tell of Marduk who slew Tiamat the dragon and created heaven and earth from the dragon's body. There are many examples as well of human beings acting out of a Michaelic impulse; the Greek myth of Perseus, the English Saint George and the American legend of John Henry, to name a few.

This Michaelic archetype is of overcoming the evil one faces through intelligence, courage and strength. Michael displays the activity that is the essence of the human being - self development. We as human beings have the possibility of personal transformation. We all have our own dragons, our own lower and less noble attributes. Our egoism, greed and selfishness can be overcome as we evolve as individuals. Michaelmas is a reminder of this process of the becoming human being as we strive toward our full potential.

Our world today is full of dragons. One of them is materialism - the reducing of everything to what is tangible and measurable, and seeing the human being merely as a physical body. Michael reminds us that we also have a spiritual nature - our human spirit that is striving toward the future. The realm of the spirit is where true freedom reigns. We are connected to the material world through our senses, our outer perception. We are connected to the spirit through our inner activity, our thinking, contemplating, praying and meditating. Human beings can strive to gain access to this sphere of Michael and ask for guidance. Michael waits for us to reach out, he does not beckon or command.

The archetype of Michael gives a picture of strength, courage and clarity of thought. Strength to kindle our own inner fire and iron will to keep on working on ourselves. These go with the courage to enter the abyss of our own soul, and the clarity of thinking to know what must be transformed.

Michaelmas falls midway between the Summer and Winter Solstices, during harvest season. The iron-filled fruits of nature are ripe. As the days grow shorter, the plant world sees to die away and the sunlight decreases. Can we keep our inner light aglow, and harvest the fruits and gifts of our own and each other's development?

Waldorf education finds reflection in the essence of Michaelmas. Each and every one of us has a gift to bring to the world. Can we learn to recognize and have interest in each other's gifts, and encourage each other toward our full potentials? Being human is not merely physical qualities of skin and bone, but is essentially the process of individual spiritual transformation leading humanity as a whole toward its future evolution. Overcoming our antipathy and self-centeredness, and meeting each human being with interest and recognition as fellow human beings; this is what Michaelmas celebrates. It is a festival of what is truly human.

Festivals are held to inscribe into the human soul a feeling of connectedness and community, both with fellow human beings, and with the world. The festival of Michaelmas is a looking ahead to the future, celebrating our process of human development. Our school community celebrates Michael, the Spirit of our Time, who teaches us of the community of human becoming. Human progress is a free deed, and it is up to each one of us.