

Archangel on battlefield reminder of God's presence

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |

GEORGE
MONSOOR

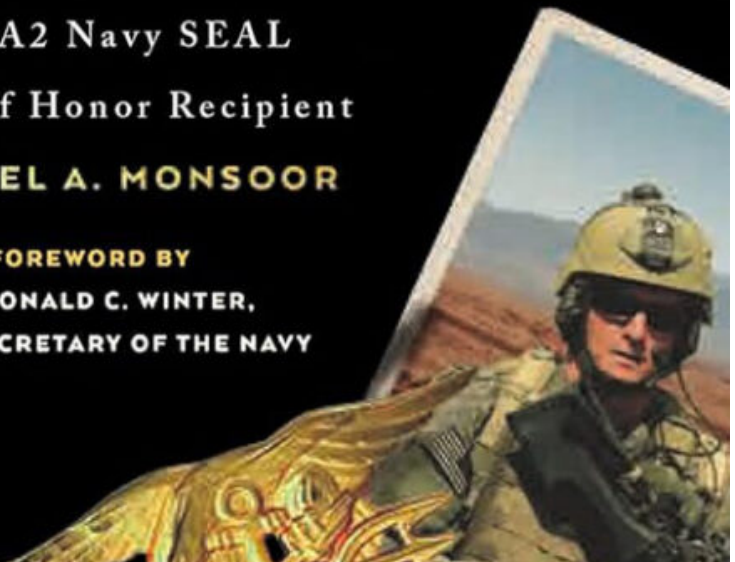
AND
ROSE REA



DEFEND US IN BATTLE

THE TRUE STORY
of MA2 Navy SEAL
Medal of Honor Recipient
MICHAEL A. MONSOOR

FOREWORD BY
DR. DONALD C. WINTER,
FRMR. SECRETARY OF THE NAVY



"Defend Us in Battle," George Monsoor and Rose Rea, Harper Horizon (2022). 208 pages, \$19.99

St. Michael the Archangel is always depicted as an armored warrior whose foot is on Satan's neck and whose spear is raised above Satan's head. He is the angelic soldier who defeats the devil, and for this reason, is the patron of those first responders and warfighters who fight evil to protect good.

There are miraculous accounts of St. Michael appearing on the field of battle in Vietnam and Korea. In the book "Defend Us in Battle, The True Story of MA2 Navy SEAL Medal of Honor Recipient Michael A. Monsoor," we read of the presence of St. Michael on the field of one of the bloodiest battles of the Iraq War: Ramadi, 2006.

The book, however, introduces us to the story of another Michael, Michael Monsoor, who grows up in California and goes on to become a Navy SEAL. He is raised in a family of four children, loves cars and has a larger-than-life personality. He is also raised Catholic, and the book shows us the quiet yet profound nature of Michael's faith.

While deployed as a member of the famed SEAL Team 3, Task Unit Bruiser to Ramadi, Iraq, in 2006, the book recounts how Michael stayed faithful to confession, quietly seeking out the Catholic priest on base. The level of violence and horror in Ramadi at this time, though well documented, is difficult to comprehend. Confession helped Michael to stay vigilant and to turn again and again to Christ, even in the midst of terrible darkness.

We also read of an appearance of St. Michael in the Battle of Ramadi. During a fierce gunfight, as Monsoor is dragging one of his wounded SEAL teammates to safety, the injured man recounts how he looked up at Monsoor standing over him and saw around them the mighty angelic wings, shielding and protecting them from harm. Angels are expressions of the providence and care of God, and St. Michael reminds us that God's presence can be found even on a bloody street in a far-off battlefield.

These examples also show us something important about Monsoor: he was holy. Michael stayed vigilant and alert for Christ, in the sacraments as well as on the battlefield, and in this way, he was ready to give his life in imitation of the Lord.

When an enemy grenade landed on a rooftop next to Michael and some of his teammates, Michael, without a moment's hesitation, jumped on the grenade and with his own body shielded his friends from the terrible blast. The date was Sept 29, feast day of the Archangel Michael. For his sacrifice, Michael was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

Christ says in the gospels, "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart." Meekness is the virtue that cultivates an unyielding refusal to give evil its sway. In this way, meekness is connected to the virtue of fortitude, by which the brave man, in order to realize or preserve the good, will voluntarily expose himself to harm. This is especially true, as St. Thomas Aquinas reminds us, when we face the superior power of evil, which can be defeated only by death or injury, even as Christ on the cross.

In part, the story of Monsoor is a reminder of the reality of evil, and that this reality can at times overwhelm us. Nonetheless, his life also stands against the lie of passivism in the face of evil. The virtues of meekness and fortitude make possible the resolve to stand against evil, in imitation of Christ and protected by St. Michael.

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