

# Poem to John Tietjen On the 20th Anniversary of his Ordination

Robert W. Bertram  
Michaelmas, 1973  
Revelation 12:7-12

“For even in the face of death  
they would not cling to life”–  
these dragon-fighting angels,  
this bloodied brotherhood  
of Michael’s men.

For men they were, though angels too,  
yet not the sort of angels who  
already gathered round the throne  
and faced-to-face with deity.

These not yet gloried angels are  
those sinners who both day and night  
have stood accused before their God,  
subjected to deceit and death  
and still, alas, engaged in war  
–a war, admittedly, that’s waged in heaven,  
though not in heaven above, beyond the fray,  
but rather in that heavenly realm  
which, as He said, is in your midst.

For notice how mundane,  
how down to earth,

these angels' weapons are:  
the blood of a Lamb  
and their own stammering  
martyrdoms.

Yet notice, on the other hand,  
who Michael is,  
whose men they are.  
He too is not some ghastly form  
some disincarnate blur,  
but is, as Daniel saw,  
that *Micha-el*,  
*Quis-sicut-Deus*,

“Who-is-like-God,”  
who imaged forth the Father  
in His own red blood and martyrdom  
right here where the primeval serpent holds  
the brotherhood in jeopardy.

Thus Michael won authority  
for us unlikely angels too  
to sing our battle-dusty voices hoarse  
with such big-talk as  
“Victory  
and power  
and empire  
to our God.”  
What dragon-baiting brass we've got,  
What chutzpah for such shy schlemitzls,  
What winners all we losers are.

So happy Michaelmas, good John,  
who've taught us as few angels have  
The Secret of this Michael's men.

For even in the face of death  
you would not cling to life  
but unto Him  
whose life you've drawn and shared with us,  
the bloodied brotherhood.

(Based on the text of the Jerusalem Bible, with exegetical help  
from Martin Luther.)

[Poem to John Tietjen \(PDF\)](#)