

Magnificat

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Today, the Virgin is present in the Church
and with the armies of saints
invisibly prays to God for us.

The Angels worship with the Archangels,
and the Apostles rejoice with the Prophets,
because in our behalf
the Mother of God
prays to the eternal God.

Kontakion for the Feast
Holy Protection of the Mother of God

We are a Catholic Monastery of the Byzantine Rite, under the jurisdiction of the Eparchy of Chicago, and belonging to the Ukrainian Metropolis in the United States of America, which is in union with the Pope of Rome, supreme pastor of the universal Church. We embrace Evangelical poverty, chastity, obedience, and stability of life, according to the Rule of Saint Benedict and the traditions of the Christian East. In our skete at Jacob's Falls, on the shore of Lake Superior in Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula, we devote ourselves to a common life of prayer and work for the praise, love, and service of God and for the upbuilding of His Kingdom through the arts.

Holy Protection

Each year on October first we celebrate the Holy Protection of the Mother of God. Commemorating the motherly care and protection the Blessed Virgin Mary shows to all her children, this is one of the most beloved feasts in the Byzantine/Slav liturgical calendar. It is also a day of special significance to this struggling monastic community.

The feast had its origin during a time of intense trial. Constantinople, the Great City, capital of the Byzantine Empire and center of the Christian East, was under siege, and its people had turned to God for deliverance from the foe. A vast crowd pressed into a church in the Blachernae district where the mantle of the Holy Mother of God was enshrined. During the course of an all-night prayer vigil, the distressed people begged the Virgin's intercession on behalf of their beleaguered city. Among them was a secret holy man known only to tradition as St. Andrew the Fool.

One of that peculiarly Byzantine class of saints who gave up everything – even human respect – for the love of Christ, Andrew did not wish to be known as holy. Rather, he lived his life of asceticism and contemplation under the guise of imbecility and buffoonery (cf. I Cor. 4:10). On this particular night he stood with the other suppliants throughout the long vigil, earnestly seeking heavenly aid in that hour of desperation. At the end of the service he was granted a vision.

In radiant light he saw the Virgin Mother of God approaching from the main doors of the church. Accompanied by St. John the Baptist, by the Beloved Disciple of Christ, St. John the Theologian, and surrounded by a great choir of angels and saints, she processed to the altar. There she knelt and prayed fervently, shedding many tears. After a long time she rose, and, removing the shimmering veil from her head, she gently spread it over the entire assembly.

By this St. Andrew came to understand that

the prayers of the Mother of God had been answered. Through her supplication of her Son, she had been their protection; the City would be spared. News of the apparition spread throughout the City, and the populace rejoiced. Soon the siege was lifted, and the enemy withdrew.

Celebrated locally at first, the feast became universal throughout the Greek speaking Church until the Great City finally succumbed to the Turks in 1453. It remains a joyous feast among the northern and eastern Slavs, who received it as part of their Byzantine heritage. From the Baptism of Rus in 988 to the present day, the Holy Protection of the Mother of God has held a special place in their hearts.

From the very beginning of their nationhood, the people of Rus-Ukraine have been surrounded by powerful enemies; their leaders have often felt need of the intercession of the Most Holy Mother of God. One of the greatest of these, Jaroslav the Wise, Grand Prince of Kiev, placed the whole nation under her Holy Protection following an important victory in 1037. Many victories and narrow escapes in ages since have been credited to her aid. Indeed, many see the existence of an independent Ukraine today, after centuries of subjection and absorption by neighboring countries, as demonstration of her abiding watchfulness and loving concern.

We, too, as a community have often begged Mary's protection in time of trial. Against all odds we have survived and grown, sometimes in seemingly miraculous fashion. Such was the case some sixteen years ago this fall, when we issued our first appeal letter to the good people who had received the early issues of **Magnificat**.

With only two weeks to go before our land contract balloon payment was due, we had in hand less than half of what was needed. Our new business was barely supporting us through the summer months, and we had no established

credit; left to our own resources, we were surely lost. Clearly, we needed a miracle.

Two days after we had mailed the appeal letter, contributions began to arrive – for the most part, from men and women unknown to us. There were some large checks and many more small and moderately sized checks. There were twenty and fifty dollar bills pressed into the hand and envelopes discreetly passed by ladies requesting anonymity. We even found one hundred dollars taped to the inside of our screen door. Through the miraculous generosity of many good people, we had what was needed on the day appointed – with enough left over to begin construction of our new dormitory.

With the property secured, we could now look to the future and begin to build. Although we remember our arrival at Jacob's falls some three years earlier, that day in 1986 when we paid off the land contract seems the real foundation of our monastery. The date was October first.

We credit the miracle to Our Lady's intercession and look upon her as the true foundress of our monastery. We recall the event each year as we celebrate this feast; we rejoice at her loving care for us, and we pray to remain always under the veil of her holy protection.

The date of that earlier and much greater instance of the Holy Protection is not so easy to ascertain. The City of Constantinople withstood many sieges during its eleven centuries as the bastion of Christianity in the East. In such circumstances the people always sought the intercession of the Mother of God, petitioning her with vigils and carrying her icon in procession along the city walls. Most often, the City held firm. Insufficient detail is given in the account to determine which siege occasioned St. Andrew's vision. Nor is it possible to date St. Andrew, himself.

But the significance of the feast does not lie in historical details. What is celebrated is not so much one particular instance of the Virgin's protection, but, rather, the *fact* of that protection

– her intercession for those who cry out to her
– throughout the ages.

The Eastern Christian liturgical tradition constantly reiterates three special privileges of the Virgin Mary: her divine maternity, her perpetual virginity, and her intercession on our behalf before the throne of God. Having been chosen and prepared beforehand, and having freely accepted the Divine Will and made it her own, without a human father she conceived and gave birth in time to the Son of God, who was born of the Father, without a mother, before all ages. As the special and unique vessel of grace poured out for the salvation of the world, she retains her virginity in perpetuity; it is fitting that the door through which God entered His creation should remain forever closed (cf. Ezek. 44:2). She also remains eternally the mother of her Son, Christ our God; with a mother's confidence, she ever supplicates Him on behalf of those who beg her intercession.

The power and efficacy of her intercessory prayer is the real theme of this feast. Through her prayers to Christ she is able to protect us from all the snares of the Enemy and to help us along the road to salvation. It is in this sense that we fly to her for protection and cry out: **Most holy Mother of God, save us.**

In her constant offering up of prayers before the throne of God, the All-Holy Virgin is the image, the Icon, of the Church, who likewise never ceases to praise and glorify God and beg His mercy on this sinful world.

In the Church we do not stand alone in our wretchedness as we come before the throne of God to seek His mercy. All the angels and saints – members with us in the Body of Christ – stand beside us, joining their powerful prayers to our desperate plea. Most especially, the Virgin Mother of God is there, in the midst of the Assembly, her hands uplifted in prayer, and extending to us the shimmering veil of her Holy Protection.

**Let us assemble today, O faithful,
and praise the immaculate Queen of all,
the most pure Virgin,
the Mother of Christ our God;
for she always mercifully extends her hands
to her Son.**

**In amazement, Andrew saw her in a cloud,
protecting the faithful with her mantle.**

Let us fervently sing to her:

Rejoice,

O protection, defense, and salvation of our souls.

From Vespers of the Feast



Construction Begins

This summer, construction resumed on our monastic complex at Jacob's Falls. When completed, the new wing will house the monks' dormitory, library, and refectory, as well as an appropriately sized and proportioned church. Together with the existing structures – after some strategic remodeling – it will provide the minimum spaces necessary for the proper functioning of a small monastery. It has been a long time in coming.

When we first undertook this major expansion project some six years ago, we had expected to complete everything in one campaign. It proved financially expedient, however, to phase the project. Phase I began in the fall of 1996 with excavation and site work; the basement masonry for the new wing was completed that winter, and carpentry work began in the spring. This provided a new kitchen and bath. Occupancy of these new areas and removal of our office space to the newly completed basement, allowed us to expand and refurbish our existing chapel and to provide it with a rudimentary sacristy. With worship better accommodated, we could afford to wait.

The wait gave opportunity for further creative thought relative to the design of the future areas of the building. Some problems were solved and details embellished; the characteristic elements of the bell tower and of the dome surmounting the church are major fruits of the delay. Ultimately, it will be a better, more distinctive building for having been put off for a while. Moreover, the time proved shorter than had been expected.

The generosity of many good people was allowing us to make substantial payments against our mortgage principal; it looked as if it would be paid off in four or five years. Then, in the spring of 2000, a little more than two years into the contract, a major gift from a longtime friend allowed us to pay it off completely. Praise God for the mercy He shows through His holy ones!

Engineering and architectural work resumed

– addition of the Chapel of the Holy Cross of Sorrow and Suffering was the last major design change – and proceeded by fits and starts during the next two years. The many and various details were finally settled upon by spring of this year. Meanwhile, financing had been arranged through our bank; we were ready to go.

We let bids on May 20th and opened them on June 25th. The low bid came within the limits the bank was willing to fund. After some consultation concerning details and schedule, we awarded the contract. We quickly vacated the basement area, which would be affected by construction, cramming the desks and computers of the office into other areas of the house, putting the furniture into storage, and boxing the books, papers, and supplies for safekeeping in the warehouse. Amid all the chaos and confusion, two weeks into the busiest part of our **Jampot** season, construction began in Mid-July.

Since the bell tower and the Chapel of the Holy Cross of Sorrow and Suffering were additions to the original plan, some excavation for footings was necessary. Fortunately, only two small trees were lost in the process; for all its bulk, the new wing of the monastery will still be relatively sheltered from the highway and will blend well with the landscape. Despite all the activity and construction at our bend in the road, some people still ask us at the **Jampot** where the new building is being built.

The supply of building materials is more evident. Because of the limited size of the building site, itself, we have had to use the **Jampot** parking lot for storage. The collection of lumber, trusses, panels, brick, and cement block has at times left little more than a drive through near our warehouse. We have been asked more than once whether there was a lumber yard next door! The clutter continues into the color season as new material replaces

what has already been used in construction. There have been occasional traffic jams, but the inconvenience is temporary, and, like the noise and dust at the house, it is more than offset by the joy and excitement of watching the new structures take shape.

Building has proceeded swiftly. Because, for the most part, the new construction is atop an already existing basement, the carpenters were able to work simultaneously with the masons; the perimeter walls were soon silhouetted against forest and sky. As they rise higher – to the top of the apse, to the second floor library, to the great south windows of the tower – we begin to get a fuller sense of the new building's height and volume. As sheathing and the setting of roof trusses progress, and the enclosure becomes more complete, our awareness of the new spaces grows and fills us with wonder as we see the future beginning to take shape. We find it a great joy to actually be within the rooms we laid out on paper so long ago.

Many people share the excitement with us. The project has received a fair amount of publicity on local television and in the press; numerous first-time visitors to the **Jampot** have asked about its location and progress, and those who have known us for some time express their happiness at seeing the activity at our curve. Cars slow down as they pass by, and often people stop and get out for a better view.

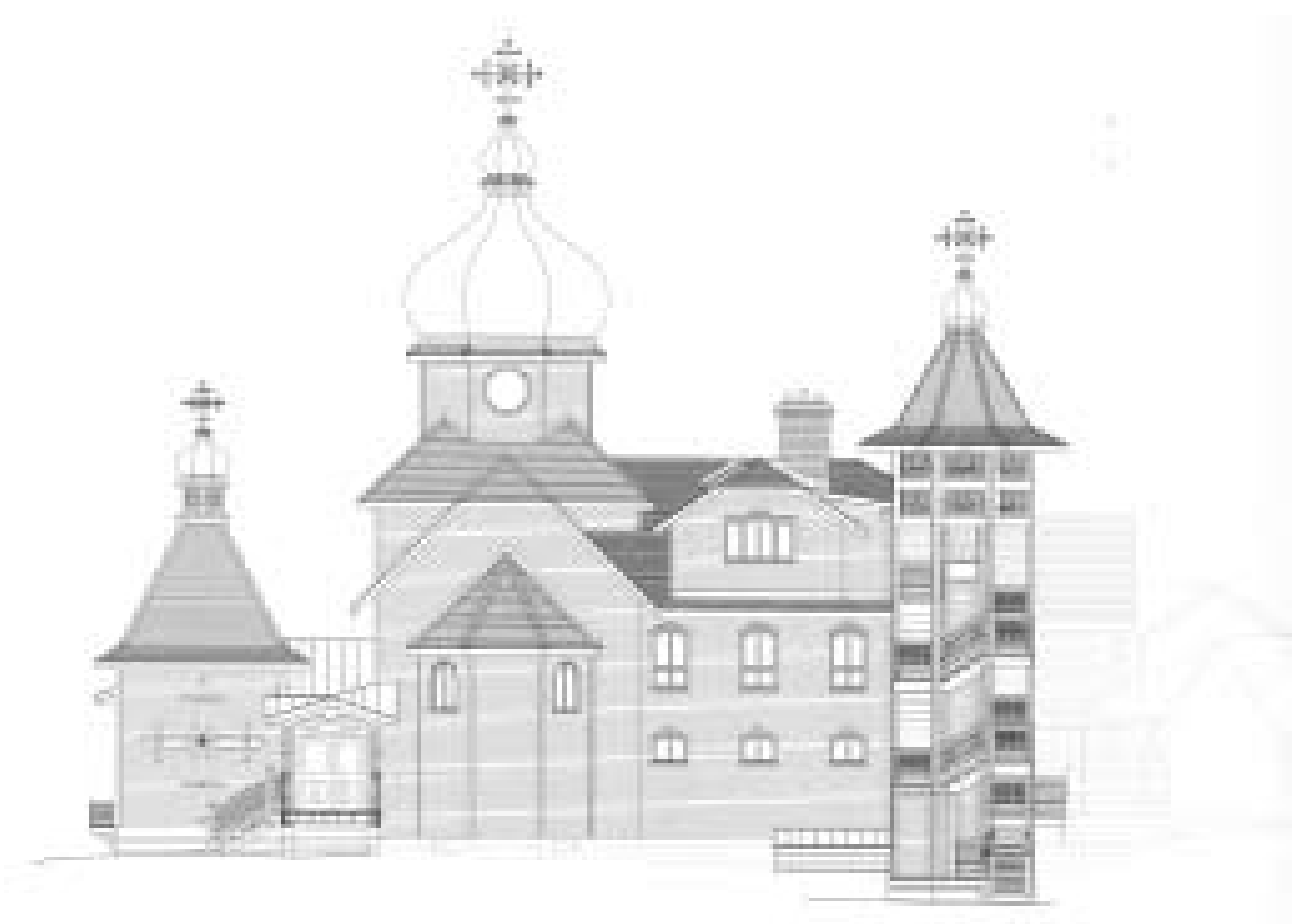
The builders, as well, seem pleased to be a part of the endeavor. They comment favorably on the solidity of the structure and the uniqueness of the design. Their dedication and enthusiasm for the work indicates that for them this is more than just another job. They, too, look forward to seeing the

golden domes flashing in the sun. We pray the Lord hasten the day.

So far the weather has co-operated, and only a few days have been lost because of rain. The situation will probably change as the bright days of autumn descend into the bleakness of winter. The workers are striving to get the building closed in and weather-tight before the onset of deep snow, but, they have a long way to go. Inevitably, the weather will become increasingly inclement, and there will still be outside work to do. November and December are often stormy here, with high winds blowing in off the Lake; by then they will be working on the tower and dome. We trust in their good discretion and pray for their safety. May the Most Holy Theotokos enfold them all in the veil of her Holy Protection.

We trust, too, in your prayers for the work's swift and safe completion. In the following pages and in future issues, we will keep you posted on the progress.





The future view from the highway: the architect's drawing of the East Elevation shows (from left to right) the Chapel of the Holy Cross of Sorrow and Suffering; the public entrance to the Narthex; the Church with its Apse, Tower, and Dome; the Sacristy, with the Library Mezzanine above and the Dormitory under the roof; the Bell Tower; and the existing structures (shown faintly) to the North of the new building.



Day one: Dismantling the deck adjacent to our kitchen to accommodate bell tower excavations at the Northeast corner of the project.



Southeast Corner: Excavating for the Chapel of the Holy Cross of Sorrow and Suffering.



*Critical work:
Positioning the Piers
on the Bell Tower foot-
ings.*

*Raising the first wall
- Southwest Corner of
the new building.*



*The Northeast wall
of the Apse goes into
place.*



Taking shape: Frames for the great South windows of the tower rise beyond the cubic bulk of the Chapel of the Holy Cross of Sorrow and Suffering.

To the right of the Apse windows, framing for the Library Mezzanine partially obstructs the existing construction.



A sense of scale: The view from the Apse to the West windows of the future Church.

Autumn Gratitude

We first arrived at Jacob's Falls in the late summer, and the coming of autumn always brings back memories of our earliest days by the shore of the Great Lake. The shortening crystal-line days, the briefly brilliant foliage, the edge upon the morning air, even the slanting light poignantly evoke the past. Performing the by now routine preparations for the approaching winter, we recall the many blessings received and the continuing evidence of divine guidance as we look toward the future.

This autumn - our twentieth in this holy place - the future seems very much with us. The pounding of hammers and the whirring of saws dominate the day around the monastery, nearly drowning out the cries of south flying geese and the rustling of leaves. The building of our new church is a great joy, a long awaited blessing. Returning from the **Jampot** each evening, we note the progress; we can see the future taking shape, and it is a marvel to behold.

Present and future blessings flow from those of the past. We are at this place in this time undertaking these endeavors because of what

has gone before. We have come to see this more clearly with each passing year, and our attitude - even amid the excitement of building the monastery church - is profound and simple gratitude. All this has come to us as a grace; in response we can only bow low before the Almighty in thanksgiving.

We thank Him for having mercifully called us to this life and for giving us the ongoing grace of perseverance. We thank Him for His many instances of divine guidance, especially for those we may not have recognized or may have found burdensome at the time. We thank Him for His many blessings and for the loving providence He has poured out for us through so many good people.

Some of these have already passed on. We remember them as benefactors of this holy monastery at each Vespers and Divine Liturgy. Together with those who are still among the living, we lift them up before the Lord and hold them in our hearts as we stand in the light of His presence. May He bless them all from the abundance of His great mercy.

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