

Volume I  
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# Magnificat

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News from the  
SOCIETY OF SAINT JOHN  
Star Route 1, Box 226  
Eagle Harbor, Michigan 49950

## AN OUT-OF-THE-WAY PLACE

"Come by yourselves to an out-of-the-way place and rest a little," said Our Lord to His disciples when the coming and going of many people made it impossible for them to so much as eat. (Mk. 6:31)

Christian monastic life is in many ways a response to this call. The monk withdraws from the press of human activity and society that he might rest with the Lord. He does not separate himself from the world out of hatred or rejection. Indeed, he is called to love the world even as the Lord Jesus, Who gave His life for it, loved it. Rather, his aim is to free himself from its distractions, to overcome its faults through prayer, and to witness before it to the coming of God's Kingdom.

The earliest Christian monks were hermits who like the Lord, Himself, (Mt. 4:1) retired to the desert to undergo temptations and trials. Leaving behind a world where the Church had gained respectability at the price of compromise and adaptation, the fourth century ascetics of the Egyptian desert fled the

lukewarm spirituality of the civilized world to do battle with the demons of boredom, pride, lust, anger, and jealousy. But these demons come from within, and humans are frail beings. We must assume that many who followed the call were not equal to the trials.

In time, as the hermits began to gather around certain outstanding Desert Fathers, it came to be seen that the guidance and mutual support offered by community life provided a greater likelihood for success in the monastic endeavor.

Thus Saint Benedict (who had himself first embraced the monastic life as a hermit) writing during the first half of the sixth century, made the monastic community the subject of his Rule for Monasteries and, thereby, shaped the face of monasticism in the West to the present day.

Benedict continued the desert tradition, founding his monasteries first in a wild, sheer-walled valley and later on a mountain top. Through the centuries monks continued to seek out remote and

### THE SOCIETY OF SAINT JOHN AT JACOB'S FALLS

We are a community of men embracing the Evangelical Counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience in the spirit of the Rule of Saint Benedict. In our monastic community at Jacob's Falls on the shore of Lake Superior in Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula we devote ourselves to a regular life of prayer and work for the praise, love, and service of God and for the upbuilding of His Kingdom through the arts.

inaccessible places. Often it seemed that the more difficult and unlikely the place, the more the monastery thrived.

We, too, sought the wilderness: the desert where one might confront the beasts and demons within; the hard place where the monastic life might thrive; the quiet, out-of-the-way spot where one might rest with the Lord; the paradise where one might glimpse the face of God.

The Holy Spirit led us to Jacob's Falls, on the shore of Lake Superior, in the Keweenaw Peninsula of Michigan.

The Keweenaw is an out-of-the-way place. Being a peninsula, it is on the road to nowhere else. It is a destination rather than a route. One does not arrive here by accident, but, rather by design. It is the end of the road, and it carries about it an aura of finality.

While the land still bears marks of the ravages of man, nature dominates it more and more. The expanse of the Lake affords limitless views of the Summer sunsets and the ever-changing weather. The forested hills offer sheltered retreats, quiet sanctuaries for prayer and meditation. Everywhere one can see the beauty of God shining through His universe.

This is a hard place, as well. The winter here is long and cold. The snow accumulates to great depths. The unprepared do not survive well. But adversity draws a community closer together, and in the silence and isolation of the long winter nights the small, still voice of God can be heard.

For all this, the land possesses well built and maintained roads and is easily accessible throughout the year. During the summer it attracts many visitors in search of tranquility and the beauties of nature. Thus it allows for an active apostolate and offers the opportunity to give witness before a broad spectrum of people.

Truly, the Lord has blessed this place. We have come in answer to His call. We are here, not by accident, but by design - His design!



(Photo by Eric Munch)

## *Listen!*

The Lord's call comes to us in many ways. Scripture and the traditions and teachings of the Church hold out the ideals and establish the framework for the religious life. But it is in our own life experiences, in our associations with those around us, and in the recesses of our hearts that the call is most often heard. If only we listen!

Often we saturate our senses with the sights, sounds, and sensations of this world. We never rest from our whirlwind of activity; we keep up a constant stream of chatter; or we submerge our minds in the waves of the mass media. How, then, can we hear the still, small voice of God? Sometimes, the din we create around us may even prevent others from hearing.

Be still, then. Listen. Open your heart. The Lord is calling someone. Perhaps it is you!

## A LIFE OF PRAYER

"At the hour for the Divine Office, as soon as the signal is heard, let them abandon whatever they may have in hand and hasten with the greatest speed... Let nothing, therefore, be put before the Work of God."

So writes Saint Benedict, the father of western monasticism, in chapter 43 of the Holy Rule.

This "Work of God", liturgical prayer in the Divine Office and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, is the principal activity of the monastic community. To this the monk is especially called, and all his other activities and work are incidental and subordinate to it. For in liturgical prayer he joins with Christ, the High Priest, and His Body, the Church, in public praise of God and shares, by way of foretaste, in the endless praise offered in the Heavenly Jerusalem. (Vatican II, On the Sacred Liturgy, articles 7 and 8.)

In our community at Jacob's Falls, the Divine Office provides the framework of our lives. Its celebration begins and ends our day and marks its major turning points, as well. Thus, we are constantly reminded of God's love and care for us, and we continually offer Him praise and thanksgiving.

We rise at 3:30 each morning to celebrate the wonders of God's love with psalms and antiphons and to hear salvation history recounted through the words of Holy Scripture and expounded in the writings of the Church Fathers. We keep vigil until dawn with private reading and contemplative prayer. At sunrise we offer psalms and canticles in praise of the Lord Who enlightens our lives, and we petition Him for our needs and those of all His people. Midway through the day we rest from our labors and pause to hear the Lord's instruction through psalm and scripture. On days when it is not possible for us to assist at Mass we incorporate the Liturgy of the Word from the Mass of the day into this

midday office. At sunset we offer psalms and canticles in thanksgiving to the Father for having brought us safely to the end of our daily labors, and we again present Him with petitions for our needs and those of His people. Before we retire we review the course of the day's events and, begging the Lord's forgiveness for any transgressions we may have made, we end the day confident of His mercy and secure protection.

Liturgical prayer thus sets the rhythm and pace of our day and calls us closer to God throughout its course. All our other activities occur in the intervals between the hours of the Divine Office. With formal prayer always close at hand, our work, be it domestic or of an income earning nature, takes on new meaning, becoming itself an occasion for contemplative prayer. And so each day is made holy throughout its course.

Visitors and guests at Jacob's Falls are invited and encouraged to join in our celebration of the Divine Office. Because they are set by the movement of the sun rather than by the clock, the casual visitor may not be able to predict with exactitude the hours of prayer, but those who remain for an extended period of time will be apprised of the hours in due course. We long for the day when we have a bell whose ringing will witness to all our celebration of the hours.

One need not be physically present, however, to join in our prayer. Indeed, our celebration of the Divine Office, being the prayer of the whole Church, is offered on behalf of all people. Furthermore, during the petitions of Morning and Evening Prayer we pray for the special intentions of our friends and benefactors and of those who have requested our prayers for some particular need.

In this way we, who are poor and without power in this world, can help people with their needs. Prayer is the foundation and framework of our life at Jacob's Falls; through prayer we can share our life with all God's people.

## THE BLESSED MOTHER AND SAINT JOHN

### SPECIAL PATRONS OF OUR LIFE AND WORK

We recognize the manifold difficulties of the life to which we have been called and remain ever mindful of our human weakness. We know that left to ourselves the burden would be perhaps too great for us. We therefore pray for one another and beg the prayers of others on our behalf. We rely, above all on the efficacious prayer of Christ in His Body, the Church. We maintain a devotion to the saints of God and seek their prayer and intercession in the difficulties that confront us daily. In particular we venerate the ever-virgin Mother of God, Mary most holy, and the son given to her by Our Lord (Jn. 19:26), the Apostle and Evangelist, John.

In veneration of Mary, we participate in the fulfillment of her prophecy: "From this day, all generations will call me blessed" (Lk. 1:48). Mary is the patroness and image of the entire Church in her supreme obedience to the Word of God and in the faithfulness of her life. Through her obedience (Lk. 1:38) Christ came into the world, receiving from her His humanity. She conceived, brought forth, and nourished Jesus Christ, God-become-man, our Savior. Treasuring all these things and reflecting on them in her heart (Lk. 2:19), she suffered anguish for love of Jesus (Lk. 2:35), followed Him even to the Cross (Jn. 19:25), and remained with the Apostles, praying constantly for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14).

We seek to remain always close to the Blessed Mother and to follow her command: "Do whatever He tells you" (Jn. 2:5). We invoke her guidance in our lives that we might know the will of God and have the strength and courage to follow it, thus becoming true brothers of the Lord Jesus (Mk. 3:35). We pray that through our heeding of the Word of God we also, in some way, may serve to bring Christ into the world.

Likewise, we hold in special esteem the holy Apostle and Evangelist, John, whom tradition identifies as the disciple Christ loved. One of the first to follow Jesus (Jn. 1:37), he reclined close to Him at the Last Supper (Jn. 13:23), and standing with Mary at the foot of the Cross he there received her into his care (Jn. 19:26-27). We, therefore, commend our pilgrimage to his particular care and claim him as patron of our Society.

We pray twice daily that through the prayers and intercession of Blessed Mary, ever-virgin, and the beloved disciple, the holy Evangelist, John, we may be surely guided in the foundation and building of our monastic life and community.

### *Your Prayers Requested*

We also beg your prayers on our behalf. The pilgrimage to which we have been called is fraught with peril, and the road ahead is long and arduous. Our physical needs are often greater than our own efforts can fulfill, and the task of building a monastic community is beyond mere human ability. Without the Lord's help and guidance our efforts would surely come to nothing:

If the Lord does not build the house,  
in vain do its builders labor;  
if the Lord does not watch over the city,  
in vain does the watchman keep vigil.  
Ps. 127:1

But God can accomplish all things. Working through the hearts and minds of His holy people, He sees to our needs. We trust in His continuing guidance and provision for the growth and strengthening of our community.

Glory to Him Whose power now at  
work in us can do immeasurably  
more than we can ask or imagine!  
Eph. 3:20

## JAM POT READIED FOR PRODUCTION



(Photo by Eric Munch)

Through the merciful providence of God and the help of the many good people who co-operated in the accomplishment of His will, we will again this summer be engaged in the production of wild berry jams and jellies.

To obtain the necessary food production license from the state agriculture department, certain improvements had to be made to our production facility, the Jam Pot, and certification of our water supply secured.

The recent approval of an interim water purification system has removed the biggest obstacle. While this system is being permitted as a temporary measure only, with a deep drilled well to be required in the near future, its acceptance allows us to continue producing jam this year and gives us more time to raise the needed funds for drilling a well.

With the generous help of a number of volunteers, the building's interior

was recently cleaned and repainted and the surrounding grounds cleared of unwanted shrubbery. Rearrangement of the kitchen and installation of the water and exhaust systems are to be completed soon. With the Lord's continued help, all will be ready when the berries begin to ripen in abundance.

To the engineer who designed the water system, to the businessmen who donated materials and equipment for its construction, and to the public officials who approved its design, our heartfelt thanks for your concerned generosity and co-operation. Likewise, to the churches which donated funds and equipment for the project and to the many people whose time, labor, and expertise helped bring it to fruition, our deepest gratitude. May the Lord, to Whose promptings you have so generously responded, shower His blessings upon you; may He fulfill all your plans and prosper your work so that you may continually act with Him in the carrying-out of His will.

## *Trust and Thanksgiving*

Thanks be to the merciful providence of God and the loving concern of His holy people! The seed planted at Jacob's Falls has survived, sprouted, and begun to sink roots. With care and nurture it will continue to grow.

Growth brings new needs. For our Jam Pot to assume a major role in our support we need wider markets and help with the harvest. To take on vocations we must provide additional living space in our community house. To properly accomodate guests we must make improvements to our guest cabins. To allow for public celebration of the liturgy we must build a properly arranged and equipped chapel. To secure our property and provide for the welfare of our brothers we must develop a sound financial base.

The Lord God, acting through the cooperation of His people, has brought us thus far. We trust in His continued mercy and love and give Him thanks.

## *Pick and Pray With Us*

We invite you and your families to join us on the weekend of August 17-18 for two afternoons of prayer and picking in support of our community.

Activities will include picking a variety of berries in the locale, celebrations in prayer and song, and a bon fire on the beach. Bring berry buckets, sturdy shoes and clothing, bug spray, and picnic lunches. Beverages will be provided.

We will begin about 11:00 AM each day and conclude with the bon fire at about 6:00 PM. In case of rain, the activities will be scheduled for the following weekend.

More information, as well as guidance as to where and what to pick, will be provided upon your arrival. We hope you will be able to join us for some or all of the fun and festivities.

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