

Magnificat

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News from
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Prime Apostles

On the first Sunday after Pentecost the Churches of the Byzantine tradition celebrate the Feast of All Saints. It is the final celebration of the Pentecostarion, the service book that has provided the variable texts of our worship since Easter, and the last movable feast of the year. With it we come to the end of the great Paschal cycle that has ordered our formal prayer since the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, some nineteen weeks previous.

Remembering all the saints makes a fitting close to our long contemplation and proclamation of the grace that flows from the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. Through His sending of the Holy Spirit, that grace is poured out on all who truly seek it, and it enables them to attain genuine holiness of life. The many and varied virtues and accomplishments of God's holy ones are all the work of the Holy Spirit and manifestations of the divine life granted us in Christ Jesus. Fittingly do we commonly call upon Him at most weekday Divine Liturgies, *O Son of God, who are wonderful in Your saints...*, for through them His brightness illumines every age.

Thus, memory of the saints is never far from our worship. Each day of the year is dedicated

to the remembrance of one or more of them. Often the commemoration involves merely a brief hymn verse and the mention of their names at the dismissals of the various services. On occasion, however, the stature of the saints being remembered demands a more significant celebration. One such occurs on the twenty-ninth of June, when the Churches of both Byzantine and Roman traditions celebrate the memory of the Pre-eminent Apostles, Peter and Paul.

The celebration is considered the patronal feast of the Church of Rome, the city that saw their martyrdom and houses their tombs. However, as St. Ambrose, the great Fourth Century Bishop of Milan, notes in a sermon written for the celebration, *Their feast cannot be confined to one part of the world*; it is also celebrated with great solemnity in the East. For Catholics of the Byzantine Rite, it is a Holy Day of Obligation anticipated with a fast, beginning the Monday after the Sunday of All Saints, and followed by a celebration dedicated to the twelve Apostles.

Veneration of the Apostles must have begun immediately after their deaths. Through their testimony the faith spread far beyond the confines of the lands where Jesus had preached, and was handed on to the next generation of Christians.

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.

The Holy, Glorious, All-praiseworthy Apostles,
Peter and Paul



What garlands of praise shall we weave for Peter and Paul,
who were separate in body yet united in spirit, and greatest among the preachers of God,
the one firmly leading the Apostles, and the other laboring more than all the rest?
For Christ our God, in His great mercy, fittingly crowns them with immortality and glory.

From the Great Vespers of the Feast
at Psalm 140

In a largely preliterate society communication was an intensely personal endeavor, and the sincerity of the messenger was as important as the logic or attractiveness of the argument. By their preaching and their manifest goodness and love, the Apostles gave the inestimable gift of faith to those who came after them; they would be loved and remembered with gratitude in death even as they were when alive.

Through them the gift of faith comes to us, as well. They are our ultimate link with the teachings of Christ; all that we know of the faith has passed first through them. Through their teaching – as written in the Scriptures and handed down by their successors – the Church continues to grow and the world is won for Christ. We owe them no less a debt of gratitude, and we remember them with love.

Peter, the rude fisherman – impulsive, boastful, arrogant, and not overly courageous – was granted an early revelation of the divinity and mission of Christ; Jesus, in turn gave him a new name and a special role for the future of the Church (Mt. 16:13-19). Because of his great love, after the Resurrection Jesus gave him the task of nourishing the faithful (Jn. 21:15-19); in the Acts of the Apostles we see him preaching fearlessly and acting as leader and spokesman for the Twelve. Two Epistles of the New Testament come down from him, and tradition attests him as the authority behind the Gospel of Saint Mark.

Paul, the highly educated Pharisee, began as a violent persecutor of the Church. Granted a special and extraordinary revelation of Christ, he accepted Baptism and began to proclaim the faith he had formerly persecuted. A fearless preacher and tireless traveler, he assumed a particular mission toward the Gentiles; founding many churches in various places, he laid the foundation of the faith throughout the Roman world. Much of the New Testament comes down to us through him; the teaching contained in his fourteen Epistles remains the norm of authentic Christian theology to this day.

Men of vastly different temperament and background, who sometimes differed on matters of procedure, but united in the faith and in their love for Christ, they are forever conjoined in the memory of the Church. According to tradition both received the crown of martyrdom at Rome during the persecution of Nero, St. Peter by crucifixion sometime between 64 and 67 AD, and St. Paul by beheading in 65 or 67. Their tombs – on the Vatican Hill and along the Ostian Way – were well known and frequented by the faithful from earliest times; St. Jerome, who died in 420, recalled visiting them often with his friends as a young student in Rome. Many sermons on the virtues of these holy Apostles have come down to us from the Fathers. In one of them, St. Augustine comments that St. Paul was martyred a year to the day after St. Peter; in another, St. John Chrysostom identifies that day as June 29th.

Aside from this happy coincidence, if coincidence it was, the Prime Apostles exhibit a unity of mission and commitment that far surpasses their superficial differences. Both received unique calls from Christ and labored ceaselessly for Him up to the shedding of their blood. St. Peter led and guided the infant Church in Jerusalem during the formative days after Pentecost and began to spread the faith beyond the confines of Israel; St. Paul carried it to the ends of his world. Peter received the charge of feeding the flock, of strengthening the brethren with his own never failing faith (Lk. 22:32), and of judging and settling differences; Paul proclaimed Christ in the face of all obstacles and probed deeply into the ramifications of the faith. Together they exemplify the Church's task of preserving incorrupt the faith handed down to us, of ever deepening our understanding of it, and of passing it on in fullness to others.

Both witness to God's use of unlikely and unworthy instruments in furthering His work and to the power of the Holy Spirit to work repentance on the most hardened of hearts. Through their prayers, may He continue His work in us.



According to His Will

...monasticism...even in the throes of the major upheavals of history, basically remained the bearer not only of cultural continuity but, above all, of fundamental religious and moral values, ultimate orientations of man. In so far as it was a pre-political and supra-political force, monasticism became the wellspring of ever new and necessary rebirths.

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger
(now Pope Benedict XVI)

Discourse on Europe's Spiritual Foundation
May 13, 2004

Moreover, in the East, monasticism was not seen merely as a separate condition, proper to a precise category of Christians, but rather as a reference point for all the baptized, according to the gifts offered to each by the Lord; it was presented as a symbolic synthesis of Christianity.

Pope John Paul II
Apostolic Letter, "Orientale Lumen"
May 2, 1995

The monk would hardly disagree with the

assessments of these great minds.

Even his cursory reading of European history reveals the crucial role played by monasteries in preserving the light of learning following the social and political collapse of Greco-Roman civilization in the West. A somewhat deeper study uncovers the developments in agriculture, architecture, art, and music, to say nothing of the various ecclesiastical reforms, monasteries contributed to Western civilization. Understanding the impermanence of worldly arrangements, the monk knows that similar times may come again.

He likewise knows that the whole spiritual and theological perspective of the Christian East has been shaped by the monastic experience, that the faithful look to him for spiritual guidance and as a model for their own living of the faith. He understands that the glorious Eastern liturgical services, forged in monasteries over the centuries, and enshrining the essence of ancient Christian

belief, have allowed the faith to be passed on despite generations of Islamic oppression or domination by atheistic governments. He can read the signs of the times; he knows such inner strength will be needed again.

Yet, true as all these observations are, they do not constitute a valid motive for embracing the monastic life. One does not become a monk specifically intending to preserve learning, advance culture, develop liturgy, write mystical theology, or serve as guide and role model for the faithful. The monks of times past were probably not at all aware that they were accomplishing great things; certainly they did not set out to do them. A witness from a thousand and a half years ago reveals a motivation much simpler – and more vast:

'I wish to serve God in your monastery through the discipline of the Rule read to me.' When the Abbot says in reply: 'And this is your pleasure?' the future disciple continues: 'First it is God's, so then also mine.'

The Rule of the Master
LXXXIX: 8-9

The monk is one who has come to believe that the monastic way of life is pleasing to God. He has this on good authority. The various monastic renunciations and observances are well attested in scripture (cf. Mt. 19:12; Mk. 12:25; Lk. 5:35; 14:33; 18:1) and have been followed by many among the Christian faithful from the very beginning. Indeed, the descriptions of the first Christian community given in **The Acts of the Apostles** (2:42; 4:32-35) with few changes in wording could easily apply to many observant monastic communities of today.

Monastic life is not just another career choice, a way of getting ahead in the world and of providing for a secure future. In reality, it is not a choice at all, but an act of obedience. It is a

response to God's call to abandon even the good things of the world and to follow Him alone – a radical act for which He has promised great rewards (cf. Mt. 19:27-29).

This commitment is often summed up in one word: **conversion**, a turning back to God. Turning away from sin, from his self will, from his personal pleasures, the monk undertakes penance for his own failings and those of others, invokes the Lord's mercy upon himself and upon this whole weary world of ours, and strives to conform his own will to that of God.

The endeavor is not altogether altruistic; while motivated by the love of God, the monk knows that conformance to the Divine will bring him true peace, and he remains ever mindful of the Lord's promise of eternal life. None the less, the undertaking does entail many serious difficulties. The monk is comforted to know that the Lord, in assigning a task, always provides the necessary graces for its accomplishment. Among them he counts especially the traditions handed on by those who have gone before him.

Christian monasticism began to appear as a distinctive movement within the Church during the third century in the deserts of Egypt and Palestine. The renunciations practiced by these





first monks were not innovations; they had been counseled by the Gospels and undertaken by various Christians from the beginning. What was different was the separation of these monks from the world at large and from the majority of Christians.

In the beginning all Christians had of necessity lived to some extent separated from the hostile and pagan world around them; but, as Christianity gained acceptance and, in the fourth century, Imperial favor, the separation began to blur. The world rushed to embrace Christianity, and many Christians eagerly embraced the world. As Christians increasingly abandoned fervor, the more fervent among them retired to the margins of society and then into the desert. In their striving after peace, solitude, and the contemplation of God, the desert was their ally; so, too, were mountains, swamps, and hidden valleys for monks of other times and places. In the harshness of the desolate and forsaken places of the earth, the monk finds the Purgatory of his sins and seeks the Paradise where he might walk with God.

Thus, we have come to the shore of Lake Superior and for more than twenty years have labored to build a monastery in this particular place. Despite setbacks, trials and frustrations, we have persevered, and the land has been good to us. Here we have put down roots and drawn sustenance. Summer's stream of visitors has prospered the work of our hands, spread knowledge of us far and wide, and engendered generosity for accomplishing the seeming impossible task. Above all, this good land has provided peace and manifold blessings of spirit.

Our area is not dry, but for much of the year it is fierce – and nearly deserted. The severity of its winters walls us in solitude, focuses our lives, and keeps us mindful of our dependence on the Lord's never failing mercy. The Great Lake, in its many and changing moods, has been a never ending source of wonder and consolation, and all around we see evidence of the Divine. In the elemental fury of a storm, the unique beauty of each sunset, the miracle of bud, leaf, blossom, and berry, and the occasional glimpses of other creatures that share this land with us, we see God shining through His universe.

In Psalms and Hymns

The formal prayer of a Byzantine monastic community possesses two distinct aspects: Eucharist and the sanctification of time.

The Eucharist, or Divine Liturgy, is the Lord's Supper, the sacrifice of His body and blood, which He commanded us to do in memory of Him. Its origins are divine, it is Christ's gift of Himself to us, our sharing in His continual offering of Himself to the Father. It is, thus, eternal and stands outside of time. Except for the assigned Scripture readings and commemorations, its form and texts change little and are contained in one slim handbook; though usually a morning service, it may be celebrated at any time of day.

All the other Services pertain to the sanctification of time, or the Divine Office. Those who join us for Great Vespers on Saturday Evening experience but a small portion of the whole. When fully celebrated, it comprises Services at sunset, before retiring, at midnight, at dawn, in early morning, at mid-morning, noon, and mid-afternoon; its prescribed texts fill many heavy volumes. This great cycle is not specifically of divine origin, but rather is a gradually developed human attempt at fulfilling St. Paul's injunctions to pray at every opportunity (Eph. 6:18) and without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17).

Though not entirely monastic in origin – Vespers and Matins, the Services at sunset and dawn, were celebrated in cathedral churches long before they entered the monastic schedule – it grew into its present form, which it had essentially achieved by the fourteenth century, in the monastic setting. Its simple beginnings may be found already among the earliest identifiable Christian monks.

The Desert Fathers were very concerned with heeding the Apostle's exhortation to incessant prayer. Since they usually lived separately, their manner of observance was flexible and individualistic. Usually it involved the recitation of the Psalms – the Temple and synagogue hymns which the Church had inherited from its

Jewish beginnings – perhaps interspersed with short prayers such as, *Lord, have mercy*. Most of these early monks were illiterate, and they had the Psalms by heart; they would recite them throughout the day as they went about their simple work of rope-making or weaving mats. Many would recite the entire Psalter – all 150 Psalms – in a single day.

The Desert Fathers seem to have gone to the parish church for the Eucharist on Sunday and gathered together only one night a week for a Service during which one monk would recite psalms at length, while the others sat and listened, a manner of psalmody still employed in many of our Services today. As monks came together in communities, however, the old individualistic ways proved unsatisfactory, and more formal arrangements developed so that the monks might pray together. Fixed times began to be set aside throughout the day for psalmody in common. In time, certain Psalms became associated with particular times – the Divine Office was being born.

It remains today essentially Psalmody; Psalms and Psalm verses comprise about half its texts. The rest is litanies of petition and blessings – which derive from cathedral services – and hymnody. In its hymns lies the true uniqueness and glory of the Byzantine Divine Office.

Some are very old, but most date from the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries. At first monks were suspicious of hymns, fearing they might overshadow, or even supplant, the Psalms. Eventually, however, monasteries became great centers of hymn writing. Many of the sublime contemplative and theological texts that today fill our service books first flowed from ancient monks whose names we can still recall.

God grant us hearts filled with joy and awe as we hear the Psalms of His servant David and chant the hymns of our holy fathers in faith some thousand years past.



Constant Help and Protection

First time visitors to the **Jampot** often spot a familiar image as they approach the sales counter and look around. Mounted on the side of a shelf in the kitchen and clearly visible through the doorway is a plaster plaque bearing a painting of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. It is perhaps seventy or a hundred years old and has hung in its present location for ten or so years, since having been given to us by some local teaching sisters who were vacating their convent and moving to quarters more appropriately sized for their reduced numbers.

We are pleased so many people see and recognize it. Often we hear comments such as: *My grandmother had one just like that, or, We have one like it – only larger – at our church.* Sometimes people have forgotten – or never knew – the image’s title; we are happy to supply what information we can. We always mention that it is the only icon universally venerated in the Western Church.

The original icon was brought to Rome by a wealthy merchant in the late fifteenth century. Upon his death he bequeathed it to a small church in the vicinity of the Patriarchal Basilicas of St. John in Lateran and St. Mary Major. There it received public veneration for some three hundred years and became famous for the graces received by many who prayed before it.

In 1812, the French troops of Napoleon captured the city and burned the church. The icon was discovered in a storage room a generation or so later, and Pope Pius IX, who had prayed before it as a child, ordered it installed in the newly built Redemptorist Church of St. Alphonsus near its original home. The Pope authorized coronation of the image in 1867 and attached certain indulgences to its veneration. Through the efforts of the Redemptorist Order devotion to the Blessed Virgin in the image and title Our Lady of Perpetual Help spread throughout the Roman Catholic Church and to the Slavic Eastern Catholic Churches, as well. The Orthodox have

no particular devotion to the image, although it is of a type familiar to them and is sometimes seen in their churches.

The original icon is painted in the Greek style upon a wooden panel with a background of gold leaf. It seems to date from the thirteenth century and was probably produced in Crete. It is in a variant style of the type of icon known as *Theotokos Hodegetria*, the Mother of God, She who Shows the Way.

Hodegetria icons are usually rather stiff and formal in pose, with both Virgin and Christ Child facing directly forward. The adult-proportioned Child sits on His mother’s lap with His hand raised in blessing. The Virgin supports Him with one hand and gestures toward Him with the other, thereby pointing out for us Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The variant style is called *Theotokos of the Passion*, because of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel bearing the Lance, Reed, and Cross, the instruments of the Passion, in the upper portion of the image. The Child’s gaze is turned away from His mother and rests upon the Cross. Startled by the realization of what is to be His future, indeed, His purpose in coming into the world, He clutches at His mother’s gesturing right hand and loses the sandal from his right foot. His mother’s expression is one of sad tenderness and peaceful resignation. The composition speaks with gentle eloquence of the reason for the Incarnation and the enduring bond between mother and Son.

We have always been rather fond of the image, and some years ago we acquired a hand-written Greek icon of the subject for our church. It is minus the crowns, of course, which were affixed to the Roman icon in the mid-nineteenth century; it is also without the detail of the sandals. As is usually the case, the Christ Child is depicted with bare feet as a symbol of the reality of the Incarnation: **He has truly come into our world; His most pure feet have touched our**



curiously, the Greek abbreviations identifying the Archangels are still in place. The faces of Mary and Jesus are exquisitely drawn, and the effect of the painting is one of profound serenity and peace. It, too, now hangs within the sacred precincts of our church.

We have always held a great love for the Mother of God as individuals as well as community. We saw as somehow significant the close arrival of two images of her under the title Our Lady of Perpetual Help. We are deeply grateful for the help and protection she has so often afforded us. We beg her to continue to intercede for us with her Son, our God, that He may save our souls.

We beg her to intercede, as well, for those whose generosity brought us these beautiful paintings. May Her Son glorify them and all who contribute to the beauty of His house.

earth.

Last summer we received a beautiful oil painting, a faithful copy of the icon in Rome. It had been commissioned in Italy some fifty years before, and now, as its owner neared the end of her life and was no longer in her own home, her daughter had asked if we would accept the painting. When it arrived we were overwhelmed by its beauty. It now graces our church, hanging directly opposite the entry door to the nave, where it may be seen by all who enter. An icon lamp, which is lit during Services, hangs before it; here we sing our final hymn to the Virgin at the end of Compline.

Only a few days after the painting's arrival, a long time friend gave us another version of the subject. This is Peruvian work, and, faithful to the local style, it has a black background. Mother and Child are crowned after the Roman fashion, and the Infant's feet are covered in soft baby shoes. The painting does not show the Archangels bearing the instruments of the Passion, but,



List Trimmed

This summer issue of **Magnificat** goes out to significantly fewer people than those of the recent past. Contributions and sales resulting from our first issue this year amounted to less than half its cost of printing and mailing. Last year a similar situation resulted in dropping the summer issue completely. This year we had the resources to cover the loss in a more timely manner. However, it has made us face up to the inevitable.

We have long wrestled with the need to cut down on the size of our mailings. Despite an annual elimination of bad addresses, the list has continued to grow. Revenue from the endeavor, unfortunately, has not kept pace. **Magnificat** was not conceived primarily as a fund raising project, of course. We have always considered outreach to be a major component of its purpose. The question to be pondered is how many on the list we are actually reaching.

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Only a small percentage of the people we mail to communicate with us in some fashion or other over the course of the year. These will, of course, receive this issue and future ones. So, too, for a while at least, will those who sign up this summer at the Jampot. We would also like to send it to anyone who may value receiving it.

Sadly, we do not know who all of them may be. We do not wish to disappoint anyone, but initial efforts of this sort are bound to be less than completely accurate. If you know of anyone who values hearing from us but missed this issue of **Magnificat**, please have them contact us; we will restore them to the list for the autumn issue.

Through these efforts, we hope to insure the continued reception of the publication by all who wish to receive it. May God abundantly bless those who follow our progress with interest and affection.