

Magnificat

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

TO BE A MONK

Perhaps the greatest single distinction between monastic life and Christian life in general is physical separation from the world. Our word, "monk", is derived from the Greek "monachos", meaning solitary or alone. To this day solitude remains the essence of the monastic experience. Of course, monks who live in community are less solitary than hermits, but the difference is only one of degree. To be a monk one must turn and walk away from the world, maintain an inner solitude, and live alone with God.

To be sure, all religious are called to leave the world, in the sense that they must place all worldly thoughts and actions behind them. Indeed, all Christians are likewise called to live as if they were not of this world, to put on the new life of redemption. But their vocation is still to remain in human society and to work there for its conversion and sanctification.

The monk, however, physically removes himself from human society and dwells

apart from his fellow men. He does this not because he is unconcerned about their salvation; as a Christian he must be passionately concerned. Rather, he sees his vocation as contributing to the world's salvation in less visible, but perhaps more effective, ways. In his separation from his fellows, the monk is most intimately united to them in spirit; he prays constantly for their well-being and redemption.

The monk is called to a life of prayer. Prayer is essential to any spirituality and must be integral to the lives of all Christians, especially religious and clergy. But for the monk it excludes all else. Unlike Christians in general or the religious and clergy who serve them, his life has no other purpose. The monk realizes his love for God directly, rather than through service to others. His life has no aim or goal in this world; it is directed solely to the Kingdom of God.

This is not to say that the monk sees himself as different from other Christ-

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.

ians, or in a special class within the Church. Rather, he must recognize himself as a Christian, pure and simple, a man aspiring to perfect fulfillment of the demands of the Gospel. His monastic profession is no more than a renewal of his Baptismal promises on a more profound and far-reaching level; his life is but living out their fullest implications.

In recent centuries most monks have also been priests, and so, in the popular mind, monks have come to be identified with the clergy. This is merely an historical and economic accident. It was not so in the beginning. The Desert Fathers for the most part were not priests, nor was Benedict, himself. In fact, in chapter 60 of the Holy Rule, he warns that priests should be admitted to the monastery none too easily. Monasticism was and in essence remains a lay movement, and the monk essentially a lay Christian. Holy Orders are incidental to the monastic vocation and perhaps, in this time of great shortage, should even preclude it.

How then does monasticism, this movement of lay Christians committed to a radical living out of the Gospel in separation from the rest of the flock, relate to the Church in general? What role does the monk fill in the economy of salvation? How does he serve the People of God? Just what does he do? Do we need him at all?

The answer lies not so much in what the monk does as in what he is. A monk exists for no particular goal other than to be a monk. He has no purpose in life other than to live the Gospel as fully and deeply as he possibly can and together with his brothers to build the perfect Christian community.

Early monastic writers continually speak of the monastery in biblical images. It is the Nation of Israel following God through the desert, or the first Christian community in Jerusalem, the believers who were of one mind and heart; it is the New Jerusalem, come down from Heaven, radiant with divine light and resounding with hymns of praise. Monks strive to reproduce the biblical models within

their own communities, to anticipate the glories of Heaven, to manifest the Church as a reality of grace.

Monasteries exist to be the Church more fully and completely. Within their walls monks strive to build true communities of the elect, totally oriented to God, to personal redemption, and to the ultimate salvation of the whole world.

In this they do not seek to set themselves up as entities distinct from the mainstream of the Church. On the contrary, they remain subject to its hierarchical authority and magisterium, they are dependent on it for the Sacraments, and they are deeply committed to its apostolate. In their own way they play a vital role in its life and work.

The monastery's contributions flow naturally but almost imperceptibly from what it is. It witnesses to the Church the essential character of the Christian, indeed, the human, vocation. It recalls the transcendence of this corruptible world and reminds us all that we are pilgrims journeying toward the everlasting reality of Heaven.

The monk has his effect not through any carefully devised and carried out program, but simply by being true to himself. The more faithful and zealous he is toward his call to the solitary and radical living-out of the Gospel, the more he makes the Church manifest in his community through a purely Christian life, the greater is his impact on the world. Alone and separated from his fellow men, he remains united to them in a supernatural communion of grace; he labors for their salvation through his prayer and through his faithfulness to his calling to be a monk.

A PRAYER

O Lord,
 we praise you
 with our lips
 and with our lives and hearts.
 Our very existence is a gift from You;
 to You we offer all that we have
 and are.

MONASTIC HOSPITALITY



"Let all guests who arrive be received like Christ, for He is going to say, "I came as a guest, and you received Me." And to all let due honor be shown, especially to the domestics of the faith and to pilgrims."
(St. Benedict, Holy Rule, chapter 53)

From the very beginning hospitality toward guests, "who are never lacking in a monastery," has been a distinguishing feature of Western monasticism. Indeed, throughout much of medieval Europe monastery guest houses were often the only lodging available to travellers. The tradition continues to this day.

At Jacob's Falls visitors and guests are always welcome, and we often will pause in our labors to talk, tour the property, or visit the beach with new-found friends. Advance notice is appreciated, particularly in the case of large groups, but it is not necessary. If not

picking or at prayer, we will be working at the Jampot most weekdays; we reserve Sunday afternoons for the reception of visitors at our community house.

We have guest cabins available for those who would like to visit for an extended time or experience our life more fully in a private retreat. Retreatants join in our celebration of the Divine Office, share our meals, and enjoy the peace and solitude our location affords. We are always available for talk and consultation, and should

they wish to taste our life more fully, they may be permitted to share at times in our work.

Our facilities are limited. Advance notice allows us maximum flexibility in scheduling and making provision for our retreatants and guests.

There is no charge for an extended visit or retreat, although a donation to help offset expenses would be most gratefully accepted.



SUMMER HARVEST

"And if the circumstances of the place or their poverty should require that they themselves do the work of gathering the harvest, let them not be discontented; for then they are truly monks when they live by the labor of their hands, as did our Fathers and the Apostles." (St. Benedict, Holy Rule, chapter 48.)

At Jacob's Falls we begin gathering the harvest around the time we celebrate the Birth of John the Baptist and continue almost to the Solemnity of All Saints. Late June brings the first startling appearance of tiny red strawberries along roadsides and under the tall grass of meadows. Three or four weeks later we begin to see an occasional thimbleberry shining brilliantly scarlet against its velvety green leaves. The raspberries ripen about the same time, and soon their are pincherries and sugarplums as well. The arrival of blueberries and bilberries makes the profu-



sion almost overwhelming, and then come blackberries and chokecherries, apples and plums. So it goes until the last apples and rosehips have been sweetened by the frost and the Lord has crowned another year with His abundance.

Summer's pace is hectic and the work often seems more than we can handle, yet it carries a certain peace and rightness. As we take to the hills and shore, to the woods and meadows, we are filled with awe and gratitude for God's merciful provision for all His creatures.

All of these look to You
to give them their food in due
season.

You give it, they gather it up:
You open Your hand, they have
their fill.

(Ps. 104:27-28)

But the needs of men are more complex

than those of the birds of the air or the beasts of the forest. Berries will not buy bread or gasoline, nor are they acceptable for utility or land contract payments. To convert nature's bounty to society's money we must apply our hands and minds, other great gifts of our merciful and loving Father.

Laboring long, heavy-fragranced hours in our Jampot, we strive to capture the sweetness of summer in sparkling jars of crystal-clear jelly and berry-bright jam. The sale of these "Poorrock Abbey Preserves", either directly or through stores and gift shops, accounts for the major portion of our earned income. We fill every jar with gratitude to the Lord God, Who makes our humble existence possible.

This year, for the first time, we are accepting mail orders for our jelly and jam. The cost is \$30.00 per case, plus \$5.00 per case for shipping and handling.

Cases may be assortments, as well as all of one kind. We will make every effort to fill all orders as requested, but, since the availability of wild fruit and berries is very much subject to weather conditions and other uncontrollable factors, we reserve the right to make reasonable substitutions when necessary. Earliest orders will receive priority in the allotment of scarce items.

The Jampot will be open for retail sales most weekdays during the summer. Besides our jam and jelly we also plan to carry a number of baked goods. Fresh bread will be available on Saturdays, and at times there will also be cookies and cakes, and such delicacies as strudel and povatica, as well. When you are in our area, be sure to stop and visit. Due to the demands of berry-picking, our hours may be somewhat irregular, but do stop: we would love to see you.



Tony Bolterstein, a friend from St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Calumet, shares with us his expertise in the making of povatica, a Croation rolled walnut bread.

Artistic Apostolate

The particular charism of our community at Jacob's Falls is the commitment to serve God, to express our love for Him, to come to know Him more fully, and to labor for the upbuilding of His Kingdom through the arts.

In human creativity we share the image of our Creator. By devoting the fruits of our creativity to His service we render Him fitting thanks and praise for His wondrous sharing of Divine likeness. Through the communicative power of art the message of His love can be conveyed more vividly and the wonders of His power proclaimed to the unending glory of His name.

In our next issue we begin a series of articles developing these themes and exploring their implications for the life and worship of the Church.

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Your Help Needed

To continue our monastic life at Jacob's Falls we need your help. To meet our land contract balloon payment on October 1, 1986, we must raise \$25, 000.00. With less than three months left, we face the very real possibility of default, and it looms increasingly large in our thoughts.

We know that our merciful and loving Lord has not led us into the wilderness to perish, but to take possession of the promised land. Remembering how He has cared for us in times past, we remain confident of His providence during this time of great need.

We therefore come to you, His faithful ones who serve as His instruments in this passing world. We beg you co-operate with His will. Your gift helps us secure our small bit of earth and lays the foundation for far greater things to come.

In all things, may God be praised.

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