

# Magnificat

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News from the  
SOCIETY OF SAINT JOHN  
Star Route 1, Box 226  
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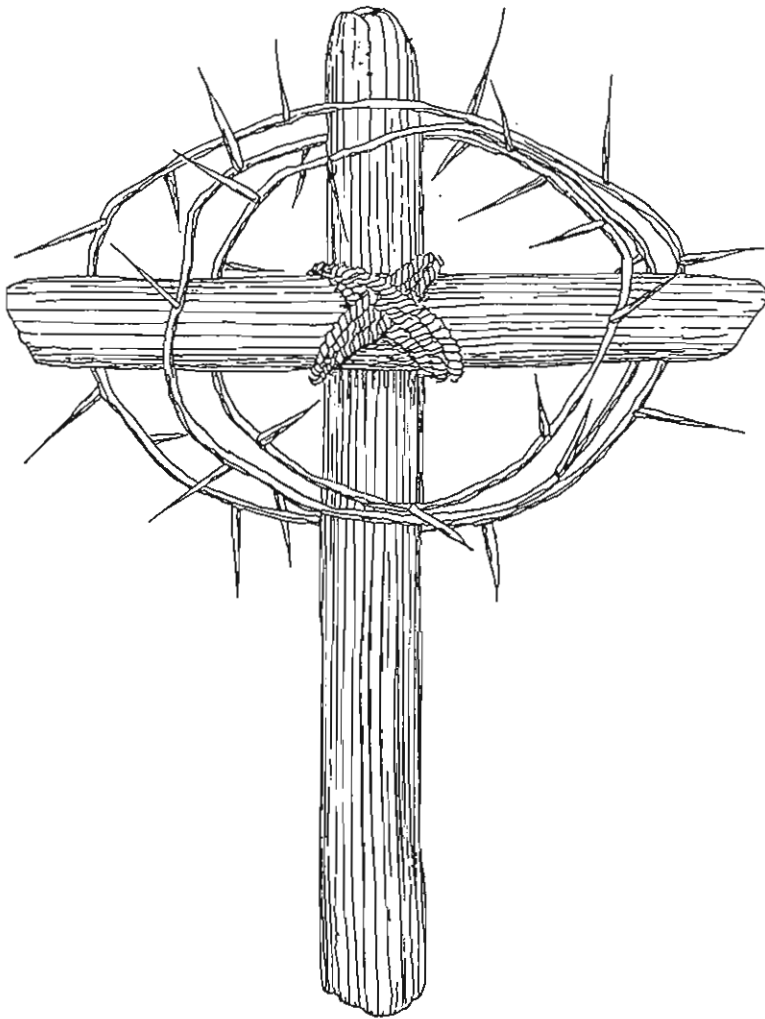
## DAYS OF GLORY

Once again we come round to those days when the Church rivets our attention with stark and grueling detail on the events which gave birth to our faith.

We recall Jesus' entry into Jerusalem to the cheers of the happy crowd. With them we sing, "Hosanna to the Son of David." But we know that soon we will join them in shouting: "Crucify Him!"

We relive and re-enact His final meal with His friends, and once more we celebrate His great gift of love, His real and abiding Presence among us. Afterward, after His Sacramental reality has been removed with dignity to a special place, we watch in silence as the altar is stripped and the furnishings of the sanctuary are taken away - as He is being taken away. The emptiness begins to be felt.

Standing through the long Passion narrative, we hear it all told again: the betrayal, His arrest, the desertion of His friends, the denial of His chief follower, the interrogations, the mockery, the beatings, His rejection by His own people. We hear



again the death sentence based on trumped-up charges and handed down by a coerced judge - handed down because of us.

"Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" we shout. How often we have done this! How many times we have chosen evil over good! So many times and in so many ways we shout: "Crucify Him!"

We see Him carry the Cross, watch Him being roughly stripped of His clothes, His last tattered shreds of personal dignity gone. We hear Him being nailed to the splintery wood. We see His bruised, broken, naked flesh - human flesh, our flesh - raised against an angry sky. We stand there with His mother, with His closest friend, and we watch Him die.

This is not merely something that happened long ago on a hill far away, just one other instance of man's inhumanity to man. Rather, this is man's inhumanity to man. This is eternal reality. Jesus hangs on the Cross in torment until the end of time. His agony is all the economic and social injustice wrought by human greed over a thousand generations, all the innocent lives snuffed out by human arrogance and aggression, all the children killed before they saw the light of day because they were inconvenient, all the shattered lives and broken dreams, all the anger, hatred, lust....

We all have a hand in this. We all contribute in so many ways to this sum total of human suffering - Jesus' suffering. Against the larger picture our own responsibility may seem small. Perhaps the sin is secret; perhaps no one has been hurt, no one knows... But we know... Jesus Knows.

So we feel guilty - oh, so guilty... And so we should... Because we are!

"Let His blood be upon us..."

"Father, forgive them..."

So we see Him hand over His Spirit. We lay Him in the tomb. There is a sense of relief.

As we kiss the foot of the Cross, perhaps we also repent. We know our sins have been nailed to the Cross with Him. By His gracious love we have been healed - we can do better. As we eat His body which has been given up for us, we may begin to feel His life flowing within us. We depart in silence and breathe deeply of the Spring air.

The following night we kindle a fire, and one candle shines in the darkness. We light other candles from the one, and, by being shared, the light grows until it illuminates us all. Surrounded by the splendor of that flame divided yet undimmed, we hear the Church's ancient hymn of victory, and with heavenly powers and choirs of angels we rejoice: Jesus Christ has risen, and darkness vanishes forever.

Christ our Passover Lamb has been slain; He has paid the price of our sins with His blood. Rising from the grave He has broken the chains of sin and death and ransomed us from our slavery. To free a slave, God has given away His only Son!

O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!

It now becomes clear:

Did not the Messiah have to undergo all this so as to enter into His glory?"

(Lk. 24:26)

His glory - our glory. We are one with Him as members of His Body, the Church. Without the Cross there can be no Resurrection. But if we have died with Him, so shall we rise with Him and our life be renewed.

Now, as we hear salvation history recounted, the depths of God's love are revealed, and, in anticipation of the Easter Gospel, we can truly sing:

# Alleluia!

# THE CHURCH AND THE ARTS

(Second of a series)

The fine arts are rightly classed among the noblest activities of man's genius; this is especially true of religious art and of its highest manifestation, sacred art. Of their nature the arts are directed toward expressing in some way the infinite beauty of God in works made by human hands. Their dedication to the increase of God's praise and of His glory is more complete, the more exclusively they are devoted to turning men's minds devoutly toward God. (Second Vatican Council: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, #122)

The ability of the arts to touch the soul, elevate the mind, and serve as a bridge between physical and spiritual can be put to best use in Divine Worship. Liturgy is the meeting point of the human and the divine above all others. Here the arts can best serve to praise God and manifest His love for the world.

For this reason the Church has long fostered the sacred arts. From the time of the Apostles she has employed music in her offerings of praise and thanksgiving to God and in her expressions of faith and love among her members.

Sing gratefully to God from  
your hearts,  
(Col. 3:16)

the Apostle Paul writes:

Be filled with the spirit,  
addressing one another in  
psalms and hymns and inspired  
songs. Sing praise to the  
Lord with all your hearts.  
(Eph. 5:19)

Somewhat later, during a time of persecution, the governor of Bithynia wrote to the Roman Emperor reporting how the Christians would gather to worship Christ with hymns proclaiming Him as God. In time these psalms, hymns, and inspired songs grew into the great body of Gregorian Chant which heightened the solemnity of the Church's celebrations for more than a thousand years. Fairly early on, the organ was added to the human voices, and later the chant began to be augmented, and to some extent supplanted, by more elaborate compositions in polyphonic and contrapuntal styles. The recent centuries saw grandiose works for a multitude of voices and instruments strive to convey an impression of the glory of God and of the power of the angelic choirs that do Him homage.

Likewise, when permitted to practice her faith in public, the Church began construction of great sanctuaries for the celebration of her Divine Mysteries. Drawing from the styles and techniques of the societies in which she found herself, she spared no effort to make her houses of worship places where one could feel awe and peace and be drawn closer to God. In time she developed architectural styles strictly her own. Whether it was Romanesque vaults or Byzantine domes hovering like the firmament of heaven, or Gothic arches and spires pointing toward the other world, or the serene dignity of neo-Classic colonnades, or the wild exuberance of Baroque attempts to express ecstatic joy and love for God, she sought always to reflect in her sanctuaries the radiance of the heavenly Jerusalem (cf. Rev. 21:2) beautiful as a bride adorned to meet her Husband.

The decorative arts were also there in the beginning. As she was able, she began to decorate her secret places of worship and the resting places of her dead with symbols of divine truth and of God's love. Coming out of the Catacombs,

these arts, too, increased in splendor, developing into the mosaic, painting, sculpture, and glazing which have continued to adorn her churches.

Thus, throughout succeeding ages, the Church has continued to enshrine her Sacraments and Liturgy with elements of beauty, that everything connected with the worship of God might reflect His transcendent beauty, communicate His divine truth, and more readily dispose the hearts of His faithful to receive His graces.

Today, no less than in the past, art must be the handmaiden of the Church, that in every way she may present herself to the world as the spotless Bride of Christ, unsurpassed in beauty and resplendent with divine grace. This is especially so in the Liturgy, the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed and the fountain from which all her power flows. (Second Vatican Council: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, #10) In the Liturgy the Church exercises and bears witness to her faith. To the attendant faithful she continually proclaims Christ's message of truth and love. Often this is their only point of contact with the Church. Beauty helps them to better perceive the message and disposes them to more appreciatively receive the graces the Sacraments impart. Likewise, to those separated from the Church for whatever reasons, whose only exposure to her teachings may come through some social occasion such as a wedding or a funeral, the Liturgy presents an opportunity to grasp at her faith and teachings. These points of contact with the divine should be as beautiful and meaningful as possible that the opportunities for evangelization and spiritual formation might have a greater impact and effectiveness.

Many artistic elements may contribute to a liturgical celebration: the music of the celebrant, cantor, choir, and congregation; the design of the church and its sanctuary and altar; the worthiness and beauty of the linen, vestments, vessels, books, furnishings, and fixtures; the grace and sincerity

of the gestures and movements of the clergy, ministers, and faithful; the drama and fervor of the readings; the pace and delivery of the homily; the dignity and solemnity of the proclamation of the Eucharistic Prayer. Human artistry can in some way enhance all of these and strengthen their impact on the hearts and minds of us all.

This is not to say that the Liturgy is some sort of showpiece reserved for performance by carefully trained professionals. Far from it: Liturgy is the reverent and loving action of all the People of God. It is the eternal prayer of Christ the Highpriest and of His Body, the Church. (Second Vatican Council: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, #7) In it we all have roles.

The question we must ask ourselves is this: Are we doing our best? Are we making the best use of the talents God has given us as individuals and as a community when we join in this action of Christ? Or is something lacking?

## *Mailing List Trimmed*

Publishing a newsletter is often a harrowing endeavor. Articles are written, printed, and sent off into the blue. One anxiously is given to wonder how many are read, how many reach the trash basket unopened. Nor is the expense small.

God be praised! Contributions after each issue of *Magnificat* have always been sufficient to offset its costs, and many people write to say how much they appreciate it. Still, we have not heard from many more, and from time to time the mailing list must be trimmed.

Unfortunately, this sometimes means that people who value the publication will no longer receive it. If you have not communicated with us in some way and would like to continue hearing from us, please let us know. If you know someone who misses our publication, please tell them to write. We happily share our story with all who wish to know.

## WHAT DO YOU DO ?

The question is usually quite innocent. Everybody does something. "We are monks." "Yes, but what do you do?" Had we said that we were teachers, or students, or physicians, or even retired, the second question would have been unnecessary, but somehow the monastic calling is not a readily understood occupation. If pressed further we might say, "We live a community life of prayer and work, according to the Rule of St. Benedict." This seldom resolves the impasse: "Sure, sure, but what do you do?! Do you run a hospital?" "No." "Do you teach school?" "No." "Do you work in a parish?" "No." "Well, then, just what do you do?!!"

This failure to communicate, while somewhat exaggerated for the sake of humor, is typical of the consternation experienced by many people when confronted with one who has embraced the monastic life and of the frustration felt by the monk when called upon to justify his life in terms of some activity.

It is perhaps only natural that one's activities should be of interest to someone else; certainly it is a good opener for conversation. But monks are not usually talkative and are often hard put to explain their lives in simple terms. "We pray, we read scriptures, we meditate, we do what is necessary for survival," is often met with, "Is that all?"

Society, it seems, needs justification for everyone's existence. Everyone must fit into some slot, play some role, make some contribution, serve some function in the world. Those who cannot are met with pity; those who will not are viewed with suspicion, or even contempt. Society is suspicious of ways of life other than its own, perceives them as somewhat of a threat.

Monasticism is the counter-cultural life-style par-excellence. The monk renounces everything society holds dear: wealth, power, sensual gratification. He withdraws from society and seeks to

have no impact upon it. He spends his time in prayer, spiritual reading, and in contemplation. He seeks to lose his very self in the all-consuming splendor of God.

Some see this as a waste of his talents, a refusal to face up to his responsibilities. Indeed, despite the fact that the monk gives up everything the world values, many consider his life to be selfish. "What good are you doing?" they ask, "How are you serving your fellow man?"

In a more spiritual society a life devoted strictly to prayer and closeness to divine reality might not seem so scandalous. But in a culture that evaluates everything in terms of cost-benefit analysis and relates everyone to some social or economic function the monk is indeed a scandal.

Nor is this attitude confined to the irreligious. We once heard a priest berating his young congregation for wanting to "bask in God's glory." Their place, he thundered, was in the trenches, in the streets, fighting for social justice, struggling to make the world a better place, improving the lot of the poor. This was the Christian vocation, he proclaimed, not "basking in God's glory!"

In all fairness, we must assume that Father was speaking to some special situation on that particular campus and had no intention of making a blanket condemnation of the contemplative life. In a way we could sympathize with the frustration of this middle-aged, social activist pastor trying to raise the consciousness of a more inwardly spiritual younger generation. Still, we were reminded of our Lord's words to the woman who complained that she had no one to help with the house work since her sister was sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to what He had to say:

Martha, Martha, you are anxious and upset about many things;

one thing only is required.  
Mary has chosen the better  
portion and she shall not  
be deprived of it.

(Lk. 10:41-42)

In her anxiety that all the necessities of hospitality be taken care of, Martha was neglecting the one thing really necessary: love-filled listening to the Lord. In her concern about doing things, she was missing the value of Jesus' visit.

The monk is called to the portion Mary chose, and a world full of Marthas is hard pressed to understand. Busily concerned with the world's many and very real needs, they find it difficult to justify a life less actively involved than their own. "If you are not part of the solution," they say, "you are part of the problem." Their flurry of activity often blinds them to just where the solution lies.

Jesus tells us (Mt 6:19-34) not to be overly concerned about the matters of the world. Our heavenly Father knows the world's needs; surely, His loving providence will supply what is truly needed.

The monk, in the prayer-filled silence of his bare cloister, sits at the feet of the Lord and attentively listens to His word. He seeks God's Kingdom first of all and trusts that all else will be provided as needed.

Herein lies the monk's true value to the world. It is not so much that he prays for the world. He does, indeed, do that. But his prayers do not excuse those busy with worldly affairs from praying: all must humbly turn to God in prayer. Nor is it what he says to the world. Usually he says nothing; monks are not often preachers. Rather, his value lies in the life he leads and in the witness he bears. Actions, after all, even in this day of T. V. evangelization, do speak louder than words.

His willing, prayerful withdrawal from all the world's passing cares and pleasures forcefully reminds those busy

with ephemeral worldly matters of the words Jesus spoke to the man of the world who had it within his power to set Him free or have Him crucified:

My kingdom does not belong  
to this world... my kingdom  
is not here.

(Jn. 18:36)

It is this kingdom we must all  
seek; here must we set our hearts.

## *Springtime Projects*

The departure of winter always brings on a host of projects. In this respect, life at Jacob's falls is no different than anywhere else. Of the many things that must be accomplished before the rush of summer work, two stand out as of prime importance: we must bring our new dormitory building to a livable stage; we must make improvements to our Jampot.

We are getting more frequent inquiries from men who might have a call to our life. The Lord may soon send us some candidates; we must have room for them. Our dormitory still needs much work and investment. Exterior siding and interior paneling are major unmet expenses.

Last summer proved a very busy jam-making season. We could not fill the demand. Redesign and re-equipment of the Jampot kitchen and sales area will make us better prepared to deal with the coming season. Major costs here involve the purchase of two double-oven restaurant stoves, as well as counters and sinks.

God willing, we will begin these projects after Easter. We trust the Lord, in His loving providence, will provide what is needed.

To Him be highest glory and praise forever.



## MOST UNUSUAL WEATHER

It is somewhat ironic, that after writing about the frozen desert in our Advent issue, we have been blessed with one of the mildest winters our area has seen in living memory.

Although we did get some sub-zero weather in January, temperatures were warm, staying in the twenties for the most part, with many days hovering near the thirty degree mark. Nor was the snow, which usually blankets the land, much in evidence. We had to clear out our drive on only four or five occasions, and banks barely formed along the roads at all.

Two young men who came to spend a few days during the Christmas season were disappointed. "You promised us snow," they said. "You haven't got much more here than we have in Chicago!"

We recalled our own disappointment four years previously when we paid a visit during another mild winter. Where was all the snow we had seen the year before? The Lake wasn't even frozen! It was the harsh winter that had attracted us to this land in the first place. Still, we did not let our disappointment deter us. It was on that visit that we began a serious search for property. We continued into what proved to be a hot, humid summer. By fall we had arrived to stay.

As new arrivals, one of our neighbors somewhat jokingly told us, "There's no such thing as usual weather in the Keweenaw. Everybody is always saying: 'Most unusual weather we're having... Most unusual for up here...'" The ensuing seasons have often proven her right. They have all been different and unpredictable. Local wisdom has it that one can never discuss winter with certainty until spring has arrived.

Yet weather forms a large part of everyone's speculations. We play the game too. The last mild winter was followed by a very hot summer... will this

one be the same? That would not be good for the berries...

But we know that it all comes from the Lord's merciful providence. Whatever comes we must accept with love and gratitude, seeing in it the boundless beauty of God. Beauty is the thread of commonality that runs through it all.

In that, this exceptional winter proved no exception. We have had an abundance of sunny days throughout. The mild temperatures were an added inducement, and we found ourselves taking long walks in the dazzling brightness.

The ice was slow in forming, never quite winning its battle for survival against the steely waters. It would creep out from the shore only to be sculpted into caves and broken into bobbing fragments that barely slowed the restless waves. This "dance of the ice-cubes" lasted most of the winter. Only during the January cold snap did the ice clog the bay. Then a high wind drove it in to shore, piling it in some places higher than the trees. Soon it was gone.

Silence is usually the major attribute of our winters, but this year we were seldom deprived of the voice of the Lake singing praise to its Creator. Many times as the waves crashed against the ice stubbornly clinging to the shore we paused to recall:

Greater than the roar of  
mighty waters,  
more glorious than the surgings  
of the sea,  
the Lord is glorious on high.  
(Ps. 93:4)

The sunny days continue. The last snows quickly melt toward springtime rebirth. We, hastening to our own season of rebirth, joyfully say:

Let everything that lives  
and that breathes  
Give praise to the Lord!  
(Ps. 150:6)

# BEQUEST BEGINS WELL FUND

The Society of Saint John recently received a bequest from the estate of Father Glen Weber, beloved pastor of St. Ignatius Loyola Church in Houghton, who returned to the Lord this past summer.

Provision of a deep well complying with State health requirements has been a serious need since our coming to Jacob's Falls almost four years ago. The water purification system which has allowed us to continue production of jam and jelly is strictly a temporary measure; it must soon be replaced.

Grace Reed, who was a dear friend of Father Weber, was deeply concerned with this problem and wanted to help. "I'll get a can," she said. "I'll ask Father Weber to bless it, and people

can put money into it. Who knows what might happen?" Grace died at age 92 a month or so before Father Weber.

The cost of a well in our area often runs as high as \$5,000.00. With Father Weber's bequest of \$2,000.00 we have established a fund for the securing of the well. We have a long way to go, but we have made a good beginning.

We are sure this would please Father Weber. We know Grace is happy. We ask their continued intercession on our behalf.

May their souls and all the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.

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

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