

# Magnificat

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News from  
HOLY TRANSFIGURATION SKETE  
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Celebrating the dedication, O Lord,  
Of the Church of your holy Resurrection,  
We send up glory to You,  
Who have sanctified and perfected it  
with Your all-renewing grace.  
Adored therein by your faithful people  
who celebrate Your holy Mysteries,  
accept the all-pure, unbloody sacrifice  
from the hands of your servants,  
and bestow great mercy and cleansing of sin  
upon those who rightly make you offering.

From Vespers:  
Dedication of the Church of the Resurrection

We are a Catholic Monastery of the Byzantine Rite, under the jurisdiction of the Eparch of Chicago, and belonging to the Ukrainian Metropoly 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.

# Dedication

**God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...**  
(Gal. 6:14).

Writing about the middle of the first century AD, perhaps as little as twenty-five years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, St. Paul exhorts the new Christians of the churches he had founded in what is now central Turkey to put their trust of salvation, not in any observance of the Mosaic Law, but solely in the cross – the suffering and death – of Jesus Christ.

Through all the centuries since, Christians have preached the Cross, displayed it in their homes and churches and on their persons, have traced it on themselves in prayer during times of spiritual or physical danger, have venerated it in their liturgies, and honored it with special feasts. The greatest of these in the Byzantine Christian calendar, the September 14th celebration of the Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross, owes its origin to an architectural project of the fourth century and is intimately intertwined in tradition with the memories of the first Christian Emperor, Constantine the Great, and of his mother, St. Helena.

Constantine firmly believed that – after twenty years of intermittent civil war – he had achieved lordship over the whole of his world by the power of the Cross. In celebration of that achievement and in thanksgiving for the doctrinal unity forged at the Council of Nicaea in 325, he wished to erect a monumental church in the place where the Faith had been established through the Cross and Resurrection of Christ. This proved no easy matter; much had changed in the three centuries since the Lord's Passion.

The site was known. Originally outside the city, it had been enclosed within the city walls during their extension under King Herod Agrippa in AD 41-44. In AD 70 the Romans destroyed the city in putting down a Jewish rebellion, and the Emperor Hadrian had rebuilt it as a thoroughly Roman colony some sixty years later, naming it Aelia Capitolina and prohibiting Jews from its confines. During the reconstruction, the area adjacent to the rock of Golgotha – an abandoned quarry into the walls of which many first century tombs had been cut – was filled in and paved over to provide a terrace for a pagan temple. The summit of Golgotha, which, apparently, protruded above the pavement, was

surmounted by a statue of Venus. What later Christian writers saw as an attempt to blot out the holy site, had, in fact, provided a landmark.

Shortly after returning from the Council of Nicaea, Makarios, the Bishop of Jerusalem from 314-333 AD – acting, no doubt, on Imperial order – pulled down the pagan temple and began excavations. Eusebius of

Caesarea, a contemporary of the events and a biographer of Constantine, recounts vast amounts of rubble being removed from the area and the unexpected discovery of the Tomb of Christ.

Eusebius describes it only as a cave and mentions no criteria on which it was determined to be the actual site of the Resurrection. Of the various tombs cut into the rock of the former quarry, this one may have conformed most closely to the scant descriptions left in the Gospels, or its proximity to the rock of Golgotha could have been the deciding factor. Or perhaps there were some signs – such as the graffiti that helped identify the tomb of St. Peter in Rome – left by Christian pilgrims during the hundred or so years between

Observing the memory  
of the Dedication, O Lord,  
we glorify You, the giver of all holiness,  
and we pray You sanctify  
our minds and hearts  
through the prayers of those  
who have gloriously shared  
in Your Passion,  
O almighty God of goodness.

From Vespers of the Feast



the Resurrection and Hadrian's rebuilding of the city.

In any case, once identified, it became a major focus of the work. Constantine's excavators cut away the adjacent rock, leaving the cave of the Tomb in a free-standing stone block in the midst of level ground. His builders then enclosed the rough stone in a structure of splendid marble – the Edicule, or “little house”, as its successors have continued to be called – and surrounded the entire area with a domed rotunda some sixty-five feet in diameter, much as we can see to this day.

Meanwhile, probably early in the course of excavation – Eusebius notes timber among the removed rubble – wood believed to be the remains of the True Cross, was discovered under miraculous circumstances in another of the area's many caves. Later tradition has associated its discovery with the Empress Helena, Constantine's aged mother, who visited the work in progress in 327-328, and, no doubt, dispensed Imperial largess on her son's behalf. But Eusebius, who associates her with the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and a church on the Mount of Olives, credits her with no special role in the work at Golgotha. Nor does St. Cyril of Jerusalem, who has much to say – in discourses delivered about fifteen years after completion of the work – about the relics of the True Cross, attribute their discovery to the aged Empress.

Whatever the circumstances, however, their finding greatly influenced the eventual configuration of the great shrine. The entrance to the Tomb opened toward the east, and the rotunda of the Anastasis (Resurrection) likewise opened eastward into a colonnaded courtyard in the southeast corner of which stood, open to the sky,

Awake to yourself, O man,  
and be made new!  
Celebrate the restoration of your soul.  
While you yet have life,  
renew the path of holiness within,  
for the old has passed away,  
and all is now made new.  
Offer the transformation of yourself  
in honor of the feast.

From Matins of the Feast

what remained of the rock of Golgotha. Further east, still, stood a great, five-aisled basilica, the Martyrium (place of Witness), some one hundred fifty feet in length, which communicated with the east walk of the colonnade by means of two doors which flanked its apse. This apse, where the holiest of liturgical actions took place, had been located as near as possible to Golgotha and to the Tomb, but its axis was centered on neither, but rather on the cave – to which the basilica gave access by means of a stairway – where the relics of the True Cross had been discovered.

Thus, within its precincts, the edifice enshrined the three holiest Christian sites in Jerusalem: the locations of the Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection and the place where His Cross was found. It was not the largest of Constantine's religious buildings – the church he erected over the tomb of St. Peter in Rome was more than twice as long – but, as befitted its importance, it certainly was among the most splendid. Stretching some four hundred fifty feet from the entry gate of its atrium to the rotunda of the Anastasis, the entire complex gleamed with colored marble, mosaics, and decorations of gold and silver.

Constantine summoned numerous bishops from throughout the Empire to Jerusalem for the inauguration of the great shrine on September 13 in the year 335 AD, the thirtieth of his reign. To the thousands of faithful gathered with the prelates under the gold coffered ceiling of the Martyrium, which Eusebius described in his sermon for the occasion as spreading out “like a vast sea”, recovery of these holy places from the ignominy to which they had long been subjected by a hostile pagan world, and the Imperial splendor with which they were now enshrined,

must have seemed proof positive that Christ had, indeed, overcome the world.

The hierarchs decreed an annual celebration, which soon became a focus for pilgrimage. The nun, Etheria, a pilgrim from Spain, visited the Holy Land about 380. In her journal she describes as the principal feature of the festival a re-enactment of an event that had occurred on the second day of the original celebration a generation earlier. The Patriarch mounted the ambo and solemnly raised aloft the wood of the Cross so that it might be seen and venerated by the worshipping faithful, who repeatedly cried out: **Lord, have mercy!**

And, so, it is to our own day.

Each year in churches of the Byzantine tradition, we lift high the Cross on the fourteenth day of September and invoke the Lord's mercy upon the whole world. That this simple rite has endured nearly seventeen hundred years after its initial enactment should not be a source of wonder. It was seen as the focal point of the commemoration of the dedication of Constantine's great basilica a mere fifty years after the fact, when its Imperial splendor was still overwhelmingly evident. Human achievement is fleeting, but God's mercy endures forever.

Of Constantine's great achievement close to nothing remains. The great gold-ceilinged Martyrium is more than a millennium gone, demolished on order of the Calif in 1009. Accumulated rubble from dome of the Anastasis, demolished at the same time, shielded a portion of its walls and preserved the lower portion of the Tomb and the foundations of the Edicule from

total destruction. These provided the seeds for a modest rebuilding of the Anastasis and a few outlying chapels over the next forty years under the patronage of various Byzantine emperors. The Crusaders undertook extensive renovations during the next century, greatly enlarging the structure and incorporating a number of the chapels and the rock of Golgotha into the whole.

The eclectic and cobbled-together Crusader Church of the Holy Sepulcher survives to this day, despite eight centuries of fires, earthquakes, shoddy restorations, and the interminable wrangling of the rival sects that have care of its build-

ings. Of Constantine's original concept only the rotunda of the Anastasis and the Edicule standing at its center give witness. Yet, after nearly seventeen centuries, this holy place remains the most important site of Christian pilgrimage, and we Christians of the Byzantine tradition still recall liturgically the joy and wonder of its inauguration.

From Matins of the Feast

September 13 is celebrated as the Forefeast of the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving

Cross and as a memorial of Cornelius the Centurion (cf. Acts 10), as well as in remembrance of the Dedication of the Church of the Resurrection. The remembrance is not an occasion of pride or nostalgia; Constantine and his great work are nowhere mentioned. Rather, it concerns rendering glory and thanksgiving to God for the gift of the Church universal, and the graces that flow therefrom. It is an exhortation to spiritual renewal and rededication to the Lord's work. May our celebration be a personal renewal and a strengthening of our zeal for the work He has placed before us.

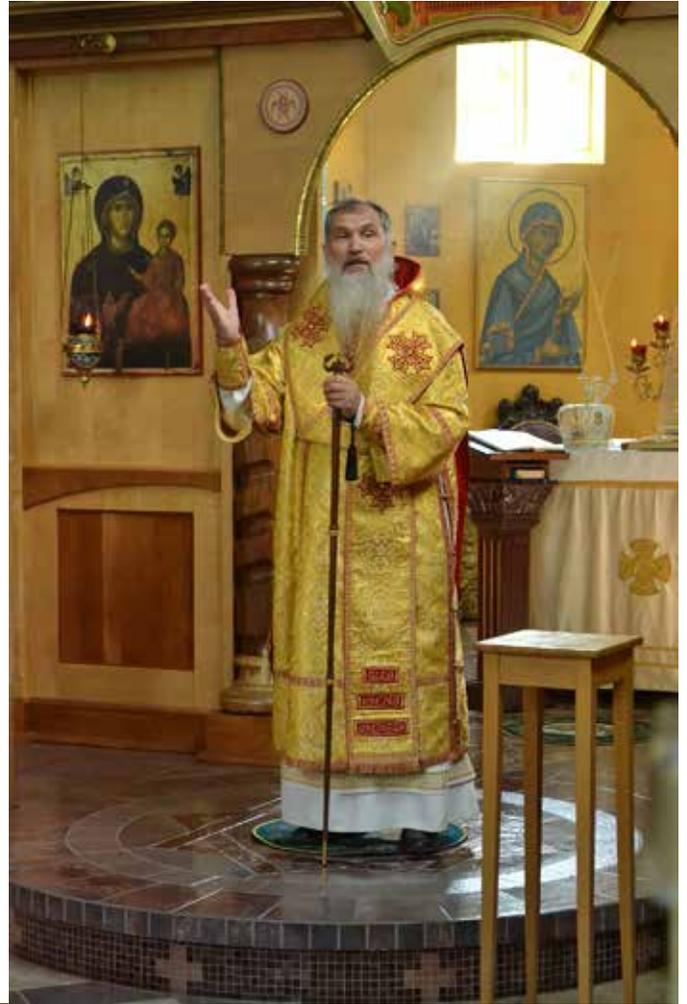
Let us renew ourselves, O brothers,  
 put off the old man  
 and live in newness of life.  
 Restraining the passions,  
 which lead to death,  
 let us mortify our bodies  
 and hate the taste of evil;  
 remembering our former ways  
 only to flee from them,  
 may we be thus restored  
 and worthily celebrate  
 this holy feast.

# A Hierarchical Visit

We were blessed this summer with a long-awaited visit from our Eparch.

His Grace, the Most Reverend Benedict Aleksiychuk, had previously visited us for a few days in December of 2017 to preside over the election of a new Hegumen following the passing of Hieromonk Nicholas, founder of this monastery. He expressed an interest in coming for a longer time when the weather would be more favorable. We issued an invitation for his presence at a celebration marking the thirty-fifth anniversary of our arrival at Jacob's Falls. Unfortunately, the late-August date of the occasion conflicted with his commitments for the Church's annual Synod, and his subsequent proposal of a visit during Lent (hardly a time of favorable weather!) fell when we found it impossible to receive guests because of a major renovation to the monastery's kitchen. We were grateful, therefore, for the mutual availability of a week in mid-July.

Although they came at one of the busiest times of the year, and **Jampot** demanded our full attention, the seven days proved pleasant and grace-filled. Arriving in mid-week, the



*Hierarchical Blessing*

## *The Homily*

Bishop celebrated Vespers and Divine Liturgy with us each day and shared our evening meal. During our hours at the **Jampot** he retired to his cabin and immersed himself in some long overdue writing, occasionally coming up for air to take a short walk, or drop in briefly at the **Jampot**. The intervals after Divine Liturgy and before and after dinner provided opportunities for some informal conversation with the monks.

His Grace celebrated the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy in our church on Sunday morning. He

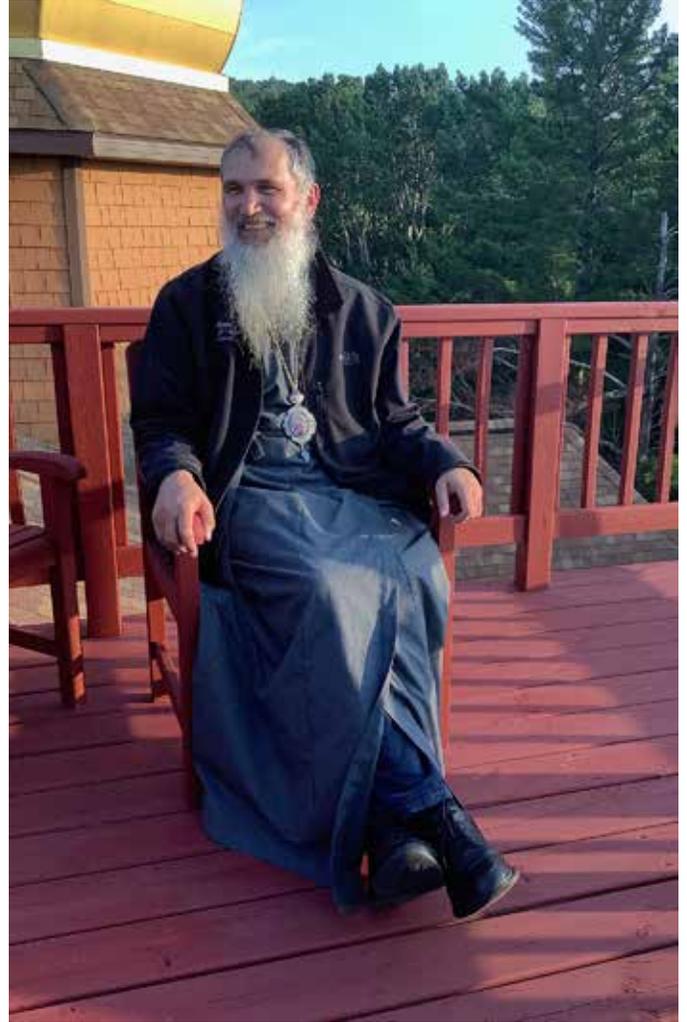


*On Brockway Mountain*

devoted much of that afternoon to sharing a meal and socializing with the somewhat larger than usual congregation.

Monday, the **Jampot** being closed, allowed for a morning visit to our cemetery and the grave of Fr. Nicholas, for inspecting the orchard, relaxing by the pond, and seeing some of the local sites. After the prayers of the Sixth Hour and lunch, the Bishop engaged the entire monastic community in discussion of the monastery's future growth and its relations with other monasteries as well as with the Eparchy. While seeming to find no difficulty with our manner of living out the monastic tradition, he offered sound advice on demeanor, example, and radiating holiness. He also proposed several initiatives he would like to see the monastery undertake. As evening drew on, we shared some moments of relaxation on the roof deck of the monastery. It all proved very positive. We look forward to a bright future for monastic life in our Eparchy with Bishop Benedict at its head.

The Bishop's time with us was relaxed, encouraging, and uplifting. Alas, it was too brief. We look forward to his return as circumstances allow.



*On the roof deck*



# The Plan

We have always looked to the future. From the beginning we knew that answering the call to build this monastery would be the work of many lifetimes. On coming into this land thirty-six years ago, we often spoke of a three-hundred-year building plan.

The “plan”, of course, was a concept, a vision, not a detailed blueprint for making it a reality. We stepped out in faith and trusted that God would guide the course of the work and reveal what was to be done next, as He unfolded His plan and elaborated His design. But we also knew that a plan needs people to carry it out. Survival had to be our first task.

Emerging from the privations of our first winter, we set about making our living conditions less precarious and securing a means of support. Incremental progress in both areas during our first seven years had resulted by 1990 in a new kitchen at the **Jampot** and augmented living space at the monastery. We turned our attention to provision of a proper place of worship.

The Lord having resolved a few political and ecclesial issues along the way, Bishop Richard Seminack, Ukrainian Greek Catholic Eparchy of St. Nicholas in Chicago, consecrated our new Monastic Church of St. John the Theologian on August 24, 2003. Coming twenty years, almost to the day, after our arrival at Jacob’s Falls, the Service seemed the culmination of all that had gone before, the fruit of two decades of struggle and toil. But we were only six percent of the way; we knew the Lord expected much more from us. And we were now more than a million dollars in debt!

When, a few years later, a major benefactor unexpectedly eliminated the debt, we again turned our attention to the **Jampot**. The business had grown markedly in the decade and a half since the last major improvement there. Proposing a modest storage building to relieve some of the pressure on the 1990 kitchen, we ran afoul of the Township’s new Zoning Ordinance. Seven years of litigation ensued.

Meanwhile, with the help (financial and otherwise) of friends, we secured an eight-fold increase in the monastery’s property and replaced the **Jampot**’s antiquated and failing infrastructure. Amendment of the Township Zoning Ordinance in 2014 allowed for approval of a three-phase expansion of the business facilities. Phase I – storage and candy production – was completed in the spring of 2015; Phase II – jam making and coffee roasting – went into operation last spring; still to come, as funding allows, Phase III will provide a new bakery and an expanded sales room. Trusting in the ultimate provision of what is needed, we turn our thoughts to the steps that lie beyond.

We always expected to outgrow our original three-acre parcel, our toehold in this beautiful land. Acquisition of adjacent property allowed for the 1990 expansion of the **Jampot** and provision of its parking lot and warehouse. The land acquired above the escarpment a dozen years ago allows for major growth as the Lord provides, but, so far, has seen only the development of walking trails, an orchard and pond, and our cemetery. Three long-considered projects in the northwest corner of our property should fulfill our expected near-term needs.

**Monastery expansion:** With the church consecrated in 2003 came a new monastic dormitory, library, refectory and sacristy. The new areas attach to a rambling assembly of small additions to the property’s original structure – a former one room schoolhouse, moved to the site about seventy-five years ago. The old building sags on a badly deteriorated foundation of cedar posts. The newer construction – dating from 1986 to 2001 – is better supported but underlain with crawl spaces subject to freezing and sometimes offering winter shelter to squabbling families of raccoons. Three propane space heaters and two wood stoves supply heat to the nine different spaces.

We have been fitfully developing a design to replace the existing jumble with a few larger rooms better suited to accommodate the groups



of fifty or so people who occasionally visit for music recitals or for student or parish functions. The new areas would also provide shelving for the books of general literature being crowded out of our more theologically oriented library, as well as additional dining space - our current refectory only has table space for eight - for a growing community and an increasing number of retreatants and guests.

**Guest House:** We currently have two guest cabins. With fold out beds, we can accommodate three or four in one and, perhaps, as many as three in the other. This may work in family situations or with groups of friends, but it is hardly ideal for a proper retreat. Moreover, candidates exploring monastic life would occupy one of the cabins for a month or more, as happened this summer. Scheduling has become increasingly difficult, and some potential guests have been unable to attend certain events for lack of housing.

A guest house with six or eight individual cells and, perhaps, a common area and a dormitory for group retreats would greatly ease the situation. We are exploring the feasibility of such a facility to the

east of M26, across from the monastery.

**Artist's Studio:** The ongoing decoration of the monastic church progresses slowly. Two murals have been installed so far, and another nears completion. The artist has been working in a former woodshop, which he shares with the monastery's maintenance crew. This results in much interruption and broken concentration. His largest projects to date have been eight feet tall, which the twelve-foot ceiling of the shop allows; there are more to come of an equal or lesser height, but eventually he will be working on canvasses fifteen or more feet tall.

We have identified an area in the forest further east from the highway that could accommodate an adequately sized studio oriented so as to receive good north light. We drove a spur of our internal access road into the area several years ago. Additional development awaits funding.

Twelve percent of the way in, the plan continues to unfold.



# At the Jampot



**Jampot** began as a way for the founders of the monastery to support themselves by the work of their hands, as commanded by St. Benedict in Chapter 47 of his Holy Rule, and to provide what would be needed for fulfilling the vision to which God has called them. We must consider it successful in both respects. **Jampot** continues to provide about two thirds of our annual revenue. Moreover, it affords us contact with the world at large and has made the Lord's work here known far and wide. Most of the benefactors who have so advanced the growth of this monastery first encountered us at the **Jampot**, and the mailing list we compile there allows our words to reach about forty thousand friends across the country. We fought hard for its physical expansion, and the continuing growth of the business bodes well for the monastery's future economy.

However, it does seem to dominate our life too much, and we often find the grueling pace of summer and fall overwhelming. The recent expansions have made the work go more smoothly; we have for the most part been able to confine it to an eight-hour day and maintain a more consistent schedule of common prayer. Nonetheless, we felt it necessary to take another measure toward keeping the *monster* on a leash.

This season the shop has been open only five days a week. Eliminating Mondays from the schedule has enabled us to approach the remain-

ing five days with more energy and enthusiasm and has allowed additional time for the necessary domestic work that has so often gotten short shrift in summers past. Surprisingly, the anticipated drop in revenue proved insignificant; sales throughout the season have remained consistent with last year. But Saturdays and Tuesdays have been busier than before. Patrons seem to have adjusted.

The season has gone well. The recently enlarged facilities have allowed for greater and more efficient production. Although the bakery operated with a short staff, summer saw only a few chaotic days with scant supplies of cookies and muffins. Jam and fruitcakes have remained well stocked into the busy days of fall.

Our cool dry summer turned into a relatively wet autumn. But no one's spirits seem particularly dampened as the annual display of fall color comes on. The shop remains crowded, often with a line of people waiting in the drizzle to get in. (We have added a long porch to the design of Phase III in anticipation of future such situations.) Sales continue strong, and we look forward to a robust finale to the shop's season.

If you have been unable to visit this summer or fall, or find yourself caught short on current or future needs, or are anticipating holiday gift-giving, we commend you to the items listed on the following pages.

HOLY TRANSFIGURATION SKETE  
Society of St. John  
6559 State Highway M26  
Eagle Harbor, Michigan 49950

# Remembrance and Renewal

The liturgical texts for the commemoration of the Dedication of the Great Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem are also sung on the day of any church's dedication and on each anniversary of that blessed event. In our monastery the two celebrations fall within three weeks of each other, with the anniversary of our arrival on this blessed shore and the beginning of the liturgical year coming between. These observances, along with the memories the season always brings, provide ample opportunity for reflection on how far we have come in our monastic pilgrimage and for pondering what may lie ahead.

A pilgrimage must be taken one step at a time, each one important as it advances us toward our goal. Care is necessary along with a prudent trepidation, but we cannot allow present concerns to impede our progress. Nor can we prolong unduly the necessary moments of rest or abandon the course, should the way turn uncertain. We must not wander, but keep our

goal ever in mind and, with renewed vigor, press on.

Remembrance helps overcome hesitancy. Time erases the many petty details and allows us to see the broad trajectory of events more clearly. Linking them together, we can often note great good emerging from seeming calamity. Remembering the Lord's wondrous deeds and the mercies He has shown in the past helps place present joys and sorrows in context and provides realistic hope for the future.

We live our lives in the meantime, in the crux of what has gone before and what is yet to come. Recollection of what has led us to the present instant gives us courage to step out in faith upon the still unknown paths that lie ahead. With renewed confidence and trust, we journey toward the goal to which God has summoned us.

We have come but a short distance and have a long way to go. We feel most blessed to have your company along some part of the way.