

# Magnificat

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News from  
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Taking heed of the secret command,  
the Archangel suddenly appeared in the house of Joseph  
and greeted the ever-Virgin:

He who bowed the heavens in His descent  
takes up His abode, wholly and unchanged, with you.  
I see Him in your womb taking on the form of a slave,  
and, in wonder, I cry out to you:

Hail, O Bride and Maiden ever-pure.

Preamble,  
Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God

We are a Catholic Monastery of the Byzantine Rite, under the jurisdiction of the Eparch 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.

# An Ancient Hymn of Praise

On the afternoon of Sunday, May 29, 2011, we sang the Akathist Hymn to the all-holy Theotokos in solemn thanksgiving for her constant help and protection, especially during the previous several years. The term “akathist” is derived from Greek words meaning “without sitting”. Although we had provided seating for those who might be unable to do so, almost the entire congregation of about thirty friends of the monastery and representatives of the local community who had responded favorably to our special invitation stood, as is customary, throughout the hour long Service. Their endurance and respect for tradition were rewarded in the reception and dinner that followed the singing of the ancient Hymn.

Tradition associates the origin of the Akathist Hymn with events of the year 626. The Empire had already been locked in a life and death struggle with Persia for four years when, on June 29, the Avars had appeared before the walls of Constantinople with a Barbarian host some 80,000 strong. Throughout July they hammered the walls with siege engines while a contingent of Persians waited at Chalcedon across the Bosphorus. Each day during the siege the Patriarch Sergius – who together with the Patrician Bonus had been entrusted with the City’s defense while the Emperor was away on campaign in Armenia – processed with his clergy atop the walls bearing aloft an icon of the Blessed Virgin, to the encouragement of the citizens and the distress of the Barbarians. When, in two separate engagements on August 7, Imperial ships surrounded and destroyed Barbarian flotillas attempting to ferry the Persians across the Bosphorus to join in the attack, the victory was attributed to the Virgin’s intercession. The siege was lifted within a few days, and the people stood in her church

To you, O Mother of God,  
Protectress and Leader,  
we your faithful servants,  
delivered from calamity,  
offer hymns of victory and thanksgiving.  
Since you are invincible in power,  
free us from all dangers  
that we may always sing to you:  
Hail, O Bride and Maiden ever-pure.

Kondak of the Annunciation  
Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God

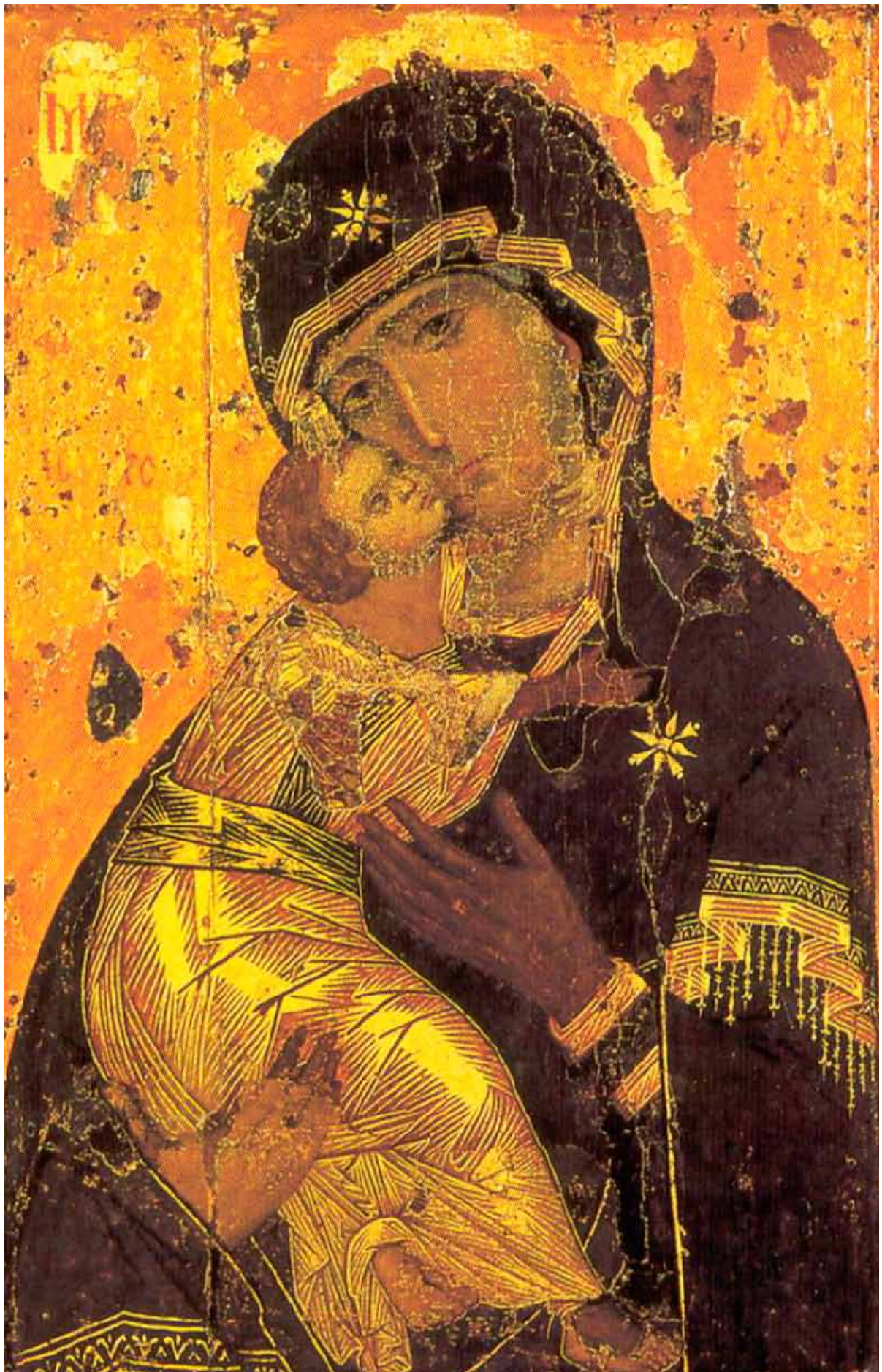
at Blachernae and in gratitude offered her the Hymn. In the next century, the Patriarch, St. Germanus (715-732), recommended the Hymn be sung – while standing – in thanksgiving to the Blessed Mother for her protection of the City during that siege as well as those of 677 and 718.

It seems unlikely, however, that it was composed specifically for any of these occasions. Leaving aside the improbability of so elaborate a hymn being composed in a single day, as some have deduced from the tradition, there is nothing in the text itself to indicate such a purpose. Except for the *kondak*, which stands at the head of the Hymn and is repeated at the end of each of

its four parts, the Hymn does not concern victory or protection from danger in any fashion. Moreover, the *kondak* is unrelated to the rest of the Hymn stylistically, as well as thematically, and seems to be of later composition than the bulk of the work. It was, perhaps, written in thanksgiving for deliverance on one of the occasions mentioned

above and added to the pre-existing Hymn praising the Virgin’s role in salvation history from the Annunciation onward.

Indeed, present usage would seem to link it specifically to celebration of the Annunciation. The current liturgical books – which reached their final form during the fourteenth century – prescribe the Hymn’s *kondak* and first strophe as the *kondak* and *ikos* of Matins for the Feast of the Annunciation. The Hymn is prescribed to be sung in its entirety, as well, at Matins on the Fifth Saturday of Lent, a day usually falling in some proximity to the Feast, March 25; among the Greeks it is also sung in four sections at Compline on the first four Fridays of Lent.





The Hymn may also stand alone, as on this occasion, as a special Service of praise and thanksgiving, and it serves as a private devotion and source of meditation for many of the faithful. In this, Archbishop Joseph Raya, whose translation we used for our own special Service, compares the Akathist Hymn to the later western devotion of the rosary and to the various litanies of praise and petition to the Virgin in the Roman tradition. It is testimony to the love of the Eastern faithful for the Blessed Virgin as well as to the Hymn's genius that it remains integral to Byzantine religious observance to this day.

The Akathist Hymn is, in fact, a unique example of a once prevalent type of Byzantine liturgical hymnody known as the *Kontakion*. (Since this term now denotes a short verse proper to each feast, to avoid confusion we use the Slavic equivalent, *kondak*, throughout this article when referring to texts of current usage.) Developing from the Syriac hymn/sermons exemplified by St. Ephrem in the fourth century, the complex Byzantine form of these poetic homilies reached the height of perfection at the hand of St. Romanos the Melodist in the middle of the sixth century.

Originally sung by choir and soloists following the Gospel reading at the Morning Service of major feasts, these Kontakia were in time supplanted by the Canon based on the nine Scriptural canticles; they are today represented – if at all – by their initial verse and first strophe, which are sung as the *kondak* and *ikos* after the sixth ode of the canon of Matins. Of the many hundreds of Kontakia composed during the time of their flourishing more than a thousand years ago, the Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God is the lone survivor in liturgical use.

O, all-praised Mother,  
who gave birth to the Word,  
the Holiest of the Holy,  
accept this present offering,  
deliver all men from every affliction,  
and save from the future punishment  
those who cry out to you,  
Alleluia!

Twenty-fourth Strophe  
Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God

It is also a most sublime example of the hymnographer's art. Its twenty-four strophes, the initial letters of which form an acrostic of the Greek alphabet in the original, constitute a detailed poetic sermon on the Incarnation of Christ and its ramifications. Parts I and II present in dramatic fashion the events surrounding, respectively, the conception and virginal birth of Christ. Parts III and IV concern the more abstruse theological matters of the relation of divine and human in Christ and the continuing role the Virgin plays in the spiritual life of the faithful. In balance to their didactic nature, the strophes are alternately interspersed with ecstatic refrains of Alleluia and exquisitely poetic praises of the Virgin.

The Hymn represents one of the greatest examples of Greek verse surviving from late antiquity; the perfection of its form and the nobility of its language would seem to indicate its composition during the great age of the Emperor Justinian I around the middle of the sixth century, most likely coming from the pen of St. Romanos, himself.

The work, however, is a **hymn**, and St. Romanos is surnamed the **Melodist**. Much as we might appreciate it in translation as a piece of literature, its greatest impact would have come from hearing it sung. Alas, about that we can only speculate; the text is all that has come down to us, and the various manners in which it is sung today probably correspond very little to the original. In our Service of thanksgiving we offered it in melodies drawn for the Galician and Kievan tones of the Ukrainian Byzantine tradition.

We pray it was a worthy expression of our love and gratitude to the all-holy Theotokos for her constant Holy Protection of this struggling monastery.

# Life with Caesar

**Render, therefore, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's: and to God, the things that are God's.**

Mt. 22:21

The question posed to our Lord specifically concerned taxation, and His answer is simple and direct: acceptance of the government's coinage is an acknowledgement of its authority that brings with it an obligation to pay the taxes it demands. No qualification is made concerning whether the tax may be excessive or the uses to which it may be put. It is a matter of principle, and it extends far beyond the financial. Government has its legitimate area of concern, and, in these matters, obedience is due.

The problem, of course, in this day or any other, is who decides. If Caesar alone determines what is Caesar's, eventually everything will be his. We know, of course, that everything, in fact, is God's; whatever authority Caesar may have ultimately derives from Him (cf. Jn. 19:11). As Christians, we can never place ourselves among those who cry out: **We have no king but Caesar!** (Jn. 19:15). While recognizing Caesar's legitimate authority and ungrudgingly rendering him his due, we place ourselves firmly within God's Kingdom and acknowledge Jesus Christ as King and Lord.

Eastern Christianity is no stranger to tyranny. The Roman world into which it was born was essentially a military dictatorship. The Legions had won the world for Rome, and the Emperor – whatever his particular military abilities – was their commander. The *Pax Romana* of Caesar Augustus emerged from a generation of civil war, was maintained by spear and sword, and, after two hundred years, dissolved again into civil war. For nearly one hundred years legions in various parts of the Empire made and murdered emperors with astonishing rapidity – until 284, and the accession of Diocletian. The son of peasants, he had risen through the ranks of the army, and it is testimony to his remarkable ability that he survived in power long enough to retire and see the successor of his own choosing take his

place. During his twenty-one years as Emperor, Diocletian reformed and restored the Roman Empire. He reorganized the military and the civil administration, establishing peace within the Empire and on its borders; he re-established the currency and, by instituting a new method of computing taxes, he solidified the Empire's finances; he provided for a peaceful and orderly succession and transfer of power. He also persecuted Christians.

Christians had been liable to persecution for a long time. At first they had been considered a Jewish sect, and St. Paul, as a Roman citizen, had even been able to appeal to Caesar to escape judgment by local religious authorities (cf. Acts 25:8-27). But, once they had been expelled from the Synagogue and their numbers consisted mostly of Gentiles, they could no longer claim the exemptions from Roman law that Jews enjoyed. Like everyone else, they were obliged, as an expression of civic loyalty, to offer sacrifice to the Emperor. St. Paul had commanded them (Rom. 13:1-7) to be obedient to civil authorities as instituted by God for the general good of mankind, and St. Peter (I Pt. 2:13-21) had counseled even the acceptance of injustice in imitation of Christ. But worship belonged to God alone; Christians could not render it to Caesar.

Worshipping neither the Emperor nor any other god recognized in the Roman pantheon, Christians had been proscribed as atheists by the end of the first century; henceforth they were subject to denunciation, trial, and execution if they persisted in their refusal. Initially these persecutions were local and sporadic, and the Church enjoyed continued growth and long periods of peace. But, with the rigidity and centralization wrought by Diocletian on the Roman world, persecution now became universal. Churches were demolished, books of Scripture were burned, and many of the faithful suffered death.

Diocletian's persecution lasted longer than his scheme for an orderly transfer of power. From the splendid seclusion of his retirement palace on the Adriatic, the old Emperor watched

the world he had ruled descend yet again into civil war. To the ultimate victor of the ensuing struggles belongs the distinction of lifting the persecution and bringing peace to the Church.

Constantine had been born of a Christian mother. On the eve of a decisive battle for mastery of Rome he received a vision of the Cross assuring him that he would conquer in the sign of Christ. Although they were mostly pagan, he had instructed his soldiers to display the monogram of Christ on their shields. Despite overwhelming odds, he met with complete victory. Immediately, in gratitude, he granted toleration to the Christian faith in the lands he ruled. Some months later, in late 312 or early 313, he prevailed upon his co-Emperor in the East to extend the toleration there, as well. Their joint Edict of Milan marks the beginning of the Church's legal existence and freedom, a gift to the faithful of inestimable value.

But Caesar's gifts are never without strings. Constantine took more than a passing interest in the faith. He endowed the Church with favored status, building many magnificent basilicas for its worship; when the heresy of Arius threatened its internal peace, he convened its first Ecumenical Council; the statement of faith adopted by that august assembly at Nicaea, and as elaborated by the Council subsequently held at Constantinople, remains enshrined in the Church's liturgy to this day. Truly a man of his time and place, Constantine was determined in the consolidation of his position and ruthless in the exercise of his power; the Church was as much his concern as the army or the treasury, and he did not hesitate to intervene in its affairs, particularly the appointment of bishops, when he saw need. Hardly a model of Christian clemency in his life, he delayed Baptism until his deathbed and, thus cleansed of all his sins, went to meet his Savior with a pure heart. His reign was truly providential, and the Church continues to recognize him as God's instrument for its salvation and strengthening in perilous times, keeping his memory and that of his sainted mother, Helena, on May 21 each year.

The Church found itself less blessed in his successors. Constantius, his son, was an Arian and promoted the revival of the great heresy; Julian, his nephew, sought to restore paganism. The emperors that followed Julian were all nominally Christian, but many were Arians or promoted various other heresies; through their influence in appointing sympathetic bishops, the Church in the East was kept in doctrinal confusion. Only through the superhuman efforts of such great lights of faith as St. Athanasius, St. Basil the Great, and St. Gregory Nazianzen was orthodoxy preserved.

The situation in the West was calmer. Distant from the waning imperial power and totally free of it by the middle of the fifth century, the Pope of Rome secured a firmer hand in the management of his Church. He had sheltered St. Athanasius during one of his exiles from his See of Alexandria and, from time to time, he was asked to intervene in the tumults of the East. His voice was seldom decisive in the immediate outcome, however; imperial power was absolute where it still held sway, and orthodoxy prevailed only when the Emperor acquiesced. The rigid, centralized Roman state of Diocletian and Constantine had evolved into an iron-clad despotism, and, as its periphery fell away, its grip tightened at home. Ultimately its doctrinal meddling turned to violence.

In the year 726 the Emperor Leo III issued an edict declaring icons to be idols and ordering them to be removed from all the churches and destroyed. The decree met with resistance among the people, opposition from the Patriarch, and intervention from the Pope of Rome who, upon the appeal of the Patriarch, sent a letter of protest. But the Emperor was steadfast. He responded to the Pope's letter with threats to have him arrested for resisting an imperial decree, but his threat was mere bombast since his armies could no longer reach into the west. Closer at hand the edict was ruthlessly enforced, and those who resisted were violently persecuted. Monks in particular were singled out because of their great devotion to the



Saints Constantine and Helena



icons, and many monasteries were destroyed. A respite at the end of the eighth century allowed for the convening the Seventh Ecumenical Council (Nicaea II), which called for the restoration of the icons and defined their rightful place in Christian worship. But the persecution soon resumed, and it was not until 842 that the icons were finally restored to the churches.

This *iconoclasm* (breaking of icons) had raged on in the East for more than a hundred years – the persecution of Diocletian had lasted for only ten – and by its conclusion a tacit accommodation seems to have been reached. For the Empire’s remaining six hundred years the Emperor did not meddle in the doctrine or practice of the Church, no heretical bishops were appointed, and there were no more appeals to the Pope of Rome. The long, painful division of the Church, East and West, would soon be at hand.

In the face of continuous barbarian and Muslim encroachment, the Empire now grew slowly but steadily smaller and poorer. Engaged in an unending war of attrition, its great victories were those of mere survival, of holding off the inevitable a little longer. But during its long decline it showed a surprising cultural vigor. No longer able to afford grandiose architecture, it filled its little churches with exquisite art that, with no hint of melancholy or moroseness, exhibited the beauty and serenity of heaven.

The Church also adapted to the times. While preserving prayers of great antiquity, she condensed her formerly vast public liturgies, allowing for their celebration in modest surroundings and diminished circumstances. Her hymnographers created new Service texts of immense beauty, exhaustively setting forth her faith, the

orthodoxy forged during centuries of doctrinal controversy. Her theology, always mystical, became simpler, more monastic and inwardly directed. Still praying as St. Paul had directed (1 Tim. 2:1-2) for all men, but especially for kings and those in high stations, she seemed already to dwell, no longer on earth, but in heaven.

Old, exhausted, and bereft of friends, its genius for reinvention and self-renewal long dissipated, its treasure stolen and spent, the Empire of Augustus, Diocletian, and Constantine, of Justinian and a hundred lesser lights, finally succumbed to the inevitable, as all things of this earth must, and passed into history on a fine spring

morning less than six hundred years ago. Its despotism and tyranny did not perish with it. The Empire was long in dying, and during the centuries in which they had dismembered and absorbed its territory, the Arabs and the Turks had learned from it everything they could of statecraft, intrigue, and oppression; and to the north, once it had at last fallen, the Grand

Remember, Lord, our public authorities  
whom You have counted worthy to  
govern this land... Grant them a profound  
and lasting peace; speak good things to  
their hearts concerning Your Church and  
all Your people... Lord, remember all  
lawmakers and magistrates, our brethren  
in public office, and all the armed forces.  
Preserve the good in their goodness, and in  
Your goodness make the wicked good.

Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

Prince of Muscovy claimed to inherit its mantle of authority.

The Church survives the empire into which she was born, preserving within her sanctuaries and liturgies an icon of much that was good, beautiful, and magnificent in the old order. She, too, learned well from the Roman state. The intense experience of living under imperial domination equipped her with customs, practices, and attitudes that easily adapted to her altered circumstances. Caesar, Sultan, or Commissar, tyranny remains essentially the same. Compact, monastic, and introspective, with her heart set on heaven and her doctrine enshrined in her liturgy, the Church proclaims Jesus Christ as Lord – and endures.





# The New Day

In our time and place Caesar no longer professes concern with matters of religious discipline or doctrine. But his reach remains long, and his ever-widening purview increasingly encroaches on the life of the Church. In this context, our recent difficulties with local government are, perhaps, not so surprising.

In April of 2007 Eagle Harbor Township denied the monastery a zoning permit for construction of a small storage building at the **Jampot**. After a second application was denied and an appeal returned without action, the monastery sued the Township in Federal Court in the fall of 2008, citing applicable Federal and State statutes limiting the extent of zoning powers. In December 2009 the Township in turn issued a citation hailing the monastery into Michigan District Court for an alleged violation of their Zoning Ordinance.

Praise God! After many months of inconclusive negotiations, the Eagle Harbor Town-

ship Board of Trustees, in special meeting on December 7, 2010, unanimously approved an agreement we could accept. On December 13, 2010, the Federal Magistrate issued the agreement as "a final Order, a final adjudication on the merits", resolving all claims in our Federal suit and closing the case, with the Federal Court retaining jurisdiction to enforce the stipulations of the Order. The Keweenaw County Clerk registered the Order with the deeds to the monastery's property on December 16, 2010; as stipulated by the Order, the local Judge, by mutual consent of the parties, dismissed the Township's action against the monastery in Michigan District Court on January 6, 2011; and on January 24, 2011, in compliance with the Court Order, the Township Zoning Administrator reversed his decision of some thirty months earlier and granted the permit for the **Jampot** storage building that had been at the root of the dispute.

In addition to resolving the litigated issues, the Order recognizes this monastery as a reli-

gious organization – which was not the case as far as the Township was concerned when we began this process more than four years ago. It allows for all the structures and uses necessary for the life of the monastery and the reception of its guests, it provides for the economic activities and support structures that make its life possible, and it leaves open the possibility of further expansion at the **Jampot**. Permits will have to be obtained and required bureaucratic procedures followed at the time of each development, but the Order insures that our requests will not be met with arbitrary denial.

We had much to be grateful for as we sang the Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God this spring. Through her Holy Protection the way to the future has been made clear, and the long-term development we discussed in these pages last year moves a little closer to reality. Indeed, work has already begun.

Soon after the thaw, we began excavations for the small storage building that had been at the center of the controversy. Our finances are always tight – and never more so than in the spring when we must provide payroll and purchase materials for production, with the **Jampot** as yet providing little or no revenue. We felt it imperative, however, to accomplish the digging and hauling before the beginning of the season and the return of heavy traffic. The many yards of material removed from the slope adjacent to the shop resulted in a sizable hole that fueled much conversation with customers over the course of the summer. If all continues well, we will begin construction near the end of October.

When operational – God willing by the beginning of the 2012 season – the new facility will provide long needed refrigeration space for fruit and produce, which can arrive in large amounts, particularly in the fall. Gathering all refrigeration into the new area will allow for greater efficiency and will free up space in the kitchen for other purposes, as well. With gratitude in our hearts for the generosity that makes it possible, we look forward to undertaking this

important development toward the future of this monastery.

Meanwhile, another, potentially more important, development demands attention. Several parcels of forestland, which we were unable to purchase in the past, have recently become available. Totalling approximately 150 acres, the property borders our current upland holdings on the west. Its acquisition will secure our western border from encroachment and will allow access from a public roadway to our currently land locked property to the west of Jacob's Creek. The land offers broad panoramic views of Lake Superior and supports a young forest of mixed northern hardwoods at its southern end as well as numerous stands of regenerating aspen to the north. Thus, its acquisition will provide the monastery not only with security, peace, and access, but also with contemplative vistas and a source of income for the future.

Our forestland is already a highly valued spiritual resource for us, a resource we share in part with the general public through our Monastic Park and contemplative walking trails. It will become increasingly important in the monastery's economy, as well, in due time, offering a necessary diversification in generation of revenue. Though heavily cut over – which is why it is available to us in the first place – it still supports a fair amount of timber that conscientious forestry indicates should be cut soon; we plan a modest harvest in the near future. As the monastery grows, the maturing forest will also increasingly provide materials to support its expansion. Already, our forests have provided the wood for the various benches and tables along the monastery's contemplative walking trails; in time they will provide timbers for its churches and halls, as well.

We have said before in these pages that the Lord's direction is often made known to us through need, opportunity, and means. For acquisition of the parcels west of Jacob's Creek the need and opportunity already exist. We trust He will soon make manifest the means.

# At the Jampot

Summer by the Lake was warm, but not hot, with few days above eighty. For the most part, it was also dry. Fortunately, we got adequate rainfall in late June and early July when it was critical for the berries. Though the harvest was a bit later than in the recent past, thimbleberries were in abundant supply. Some of the other berries were spotty, but we managed to get our quota on most things well before the end of season. We should be able to maintain a good variety of jam and jelly well into the winter months.



Business was brisk from Independence Day on, and both July and August were our busiest yet. In general, the shop functioned smoothly, and we found time to greet longtime friends and to make the acquaintance of first time visitors temporarily escaping hotter climes. By the end of August we were starting to run out of fruitcakes and some varieties of jam; we found ourselves spending many late nights in the kitchen. We were grateful for the more relaxed pace of September.

The beautiful weather continued well past Labor Day; daytime temperatures did not generally drop into the sixties until mid-September. We began to see color about that time, as well – a bit earlier than in recent years, boding, perhaps, an early winter (we found frost on the orchard floor on the sixteenth of the month). But, for now, the days remain glorious. Temperatures are only moderately brisk, rain has not been overly abundant, and the color is nearing its vibrant peak. Saturdays are exceptionally busy as people get out to see the color and enjoy the remaining magnificent days. It seldom gets much better than this. And, happily, we work our way into fall.



**Jampot** will close its doors on the 2011 season on October 22; three potentially very busy weeks remain. If you are planning a trip our way during these remaining glorious and golden days, we look forward to seeing you in the shop. If not, we encourage you to avail yourself of the items listed on the following pages, for your pleasure and the enjoyment of your friends.

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

## Still Here!

It happened any number of times this summer, with only minor variations:

*"It's been twenty years since the last time I visited the area. I'm really glad to see you're still here."*

Perseverance is the monastic virtue *par excellence*, and monks live out a vow of stability; it is only to be expected that we would be still here. Ours, however, is an age of impermanence, and personal commitment to anything – or anyone! – is often sadly lacking. Fads come and go, patterns of speech change, the meanings of words are manipulated by the molders of public opinion, and dedication lasts only as long as convenient. Everything is flux, and the slipperiest manage to stay on top.

The monk stands as a witness against the Spirit of this Age. His commitment to his monastery is permanent, to its members and to its place, as well as to its way of life. Many would see this as foolishness, certainly no way to get ahead in the world; some might resent it as obstinance, a hindrance to their own designs; most, however,

recognize its good and are truly glad to find the same people and operations in place after many years.

*"That's too long to stay away," we say, "but we're glad you came back... and that you remembered us after all these years. Come back and see us again... and don't wait so long!"*

And, indeed, we are glad. Glad for those returning after a long time, as well as those we see year after year; for the familiar faces of local residents, for the freshness of the college students, and the surprise and wonder of first time visitors; for the constancy of the young people who have been coming in as long as they can remember and now bring their own children with them. We thank God for each one. They make it all possible and remain a source of joy.

As we approach our twenty-ninth winter on this windy shore, and **Jampot** completes its twenty-fifth season, we find ourselves truly glad that we – and you! – are still here.