

Welcome To Maine - by Sr. Margaret Dorgan, DCM

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WELCOME TO MAINE

Every season in Maine reveals its own particular loveliness, providing a changing day-to-day scene to take the breath away. Summer has a special attraction when invigorating coolness draws visitors from areas that experience high temperatures. Our waters in their multiple forms offer fishing, swimming and boating with exhilarating breezes blowing. Maine has 3478 miles of coastline, 6000 lakes and ponds, 32,000 miles of rivers and streams. We borrow lines from biblical sources to express the enchantment found here, knowing the inspired writers are glad to share their words in praise of a bountiful Creator. "How great are your works, O Lord!" (Ps 92:6).

Since our Maker favors Maine so much, welcoming others is a way we praise God for all that encompasses us. We know that a time of refreshment can open the spirit to many possibilities, among them the possibility of praying. "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under the sun" (Ecc 3:1).

When eyes are opened, they behold everywhere invitations from God presenting spectacles of beauty that can lead to deeper communion with the divine. These encounters may be brief or long-lasting. "Go up onto a high mountain," Isaiah suggests (40:9). Perhaps we choose Mt. Katahdin, which is almost a mile above sea level. Scaling its height, a climber pauses to sigh over the exertion required-- and then sighs at the wonder each step reveals. At Katahdin's peak, awe overflows. In a later chapter, Isaiah tells us, "You shall be radiant at what you see. Your heart shall throb and overflow" (Is 60:5). Our legs take us step-by-step to the summit and then provide an uplift for the soul.

A goal we are trying to reach may seem like a mountain as we labor to raise our lives to a yet higher level. "What are you, O great mountain?" is a question asked by the prophet Zechariah (4:7). The answer for each individual is not the same. And while we climb, that answer changes as God speaks to us at a different stage of our consciousness. Perhaps our aim is advanced education, a job producing more income or one that serves others better. We might desire to rise higher in a personal relationship. Human life presents us with many symbolic mountains to scale. We pause to consider what peak we have our sights on and ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten us: Is this climbing worth the energy it will take?

The four evangelists describe Jesus as He makes his way up a mountain. When a worthy height challenges us, urging us to move upward, Jesus ascends with us. He also joins us when life leads downward, perhaps in a decline of our health. "Then He went out to the mountain to pray....coming down from the mountain, He stopped at a

level stretch" (Lk 6:12, 17). Jesus accompanies us wherever we go in our personal history.

Changes in our lives can often find something in Maine that images them. Maine's geological variations, its distinctive forms, are its distinguishing features. We can travel onward or stay in a favorite place. Inland and coastland differ in temperature and in nature's offerings. Our boundaries enclose 33,215 square miles, 320 miles long and 210 miles wide. We smile at the other five New England states, knowing Maine is almost as extensive as the rest combined. Just the northern county of Aroostook embraces in its 6,543 square miles an area that surpasses the size of Connecticut and Rhode Island combined. (Having been born and brought up in "Little Rhody," I find the expansiveness of Maine really impressive.) Seventeen million acres of forestland, the largest east of the Rockies, add to its reputation, providing employment and economic advantage, as well as refuge for moose, our state animal, and numberless creatures who dwell within its protective cover. "Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice. Let the sea and what fills it resound. Let the fields be joyful and all that is in them " (Ps 96:11,12).

Every part of creation deserves applause, but we who make our home in Maine are especially grateful for what it gives. A canticle of praise rises spontaneously as we pass over a border and know we're in the pine tree state. Every day won't be sunny. That is good since rain showers us with blessings, too. Whenever a new day dawns, we know its hours contain a message from Jesus. We turn our hearts to Him and recognize His Presence in every passing moment. **"Sing praise to the Lord, you faithful ...with the morning comes rejoicing" (Ps 30:5,6).**

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