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JOIN IN A SONG OF SUMMER

Summer in Maine: “Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May/and summer’s lease has all too short a date” (Shakespeare: Sonnets 18). Yes, it seems too brief a span of time, but then our bright-colored autumn comes on its heels. If William Shakespeare had been able to taste the flavor of a Maine’s summer sunrise and sunset and all the hours in between, think of the sonnets he would have written about our state. Prose doesn’t do it justice. We all want to turn into poets to sound forth a canticle of appreciation to the Maker of such splendor. The Psalmist gives us lines to sing to God as we breathe in the sweet summer air. “Yours is the day and yours the night. You fashioned the moon and the sun. You fixed all the limits of the land. Summer and winter You made” (Ps 74: 16,17). We add, “Not just summer, God, but a *Maine* summer. For this we praise You exceedingly.”

Matthew Arnold wrote of “all the live murmur of a summer’s day” (The Scholar-Gypsy). We have much more than murmur as the sounds of July and August reach our ears. Across our boundaries come visitors in the thousands and a much larger influx this year. It is a time of sharing. Welcome, welcome. What we have, we want you to enjoy too.

Can so many people all at once unnerve some of us? Let’s pause to consider our summer abundance: woods and fields, nocturnal coolness, refreshing water in form of ocean, lakes, and ponds. St. Paul would say what he wrote in his epistle to the Romans, “Be generous in offering hospitality” (12:13). Yes, the roads are crowded. We stand in longer lines at checkout counters. If the author of First Peter heard a bit of whining, he would whisper, “Be hospitable one to another without complaining” (4:9). And most of us do not grumble. A smile is much better.

We are brothers and sisters, children of a heavenly Father. “The Lord looks down and observes the whole human race... beholds all who dwell on the earth. The One Who fashioned the hearts of each” (Ps 33: 13-15). Often our eyes open wider as those who cross our borders express their own insightful perception of the natural wonders within our boundaries. Their interaction with us can unveil something in our small world we have taken for granted. Out-of-state guests admire the particular way incoming waves pound a crescendo on the shore, the sound of a loon on a lake, the path through a silent meadow into our abundant woods. And, of course, we can lead them to hidden scenes of beauty we know well and are grateful for.

When we gather for Mass, our ears hear the marvelous medley of various accents. We recognize visitors from previous years, “So good to see you again. How have you been?” The flow of tourists throughout Maine makes our population much more open to

diversity. I've heard this remarked upon. "People here are very open, not turning in on themselves." We listen to God's invitation to expand our hearts and we do so cheerfully.

The sense of connectedness, of different women and men coming together, is an important part of Christ's message. We do not want to clasp to ourselves the gifts bestowed by a generous God. Sharing does not deprive us. Celebrating with others makes our Maine beauty more radiant. The call of Jesus is a summons to be companions. In Christ, we are all comrades, glad to walk forward in unison.

In a world where enmity reigns in too many places, we have the assurance, "The Dayspring from on high shall visit us in His mercy...to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Lk 1:79). St. Paul urges us, "Be united. Live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you" (2 Co 13:11). In our own miniature sphere of life and action, if we see dissension beginning to sow its noxious seed, we do what we can to hinder its growth. With courage united to gentleness, we try to uproot any spreading discord.

The wonder of our summer makes us pause in gratitude as we see choice plants blooming and crops increasing. Pick the blueberries, taste their low-bush freshness, and offer their rounded succulence to others.

Looking at our beautiful Maine seascape and landscape, who can help acclaiming the harmony that keeps all creatures in balance? "How great are Your works, O Lord. How very deep are Your thoughts...You make me glad, O Lord, by Your deeds. At the works of Your hands, I rejoice" (Ps 92: 6,5). Our happiness increases when many more rejoice with us.

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