



Grinnell Glacier, at Many Glacier, Montana

Glacier's Grace

—*brother Daniel*

WAS TOLD BY ONE OF OUR PRIORY GUESTS WHO HAD been to Glacier National Park, Montana: “Brother, you are about to see some of the most spectacular scenes on Earth!”

As brothers rode through the “Going to the Sun Road” in the National Park, I had the feeling of journeying through the six days of creation. The landscape sparkled under fresh sunshine. The colors and hues of these valleys were dotted with waterfalls and rainbows. We found ourselves enveloped by shadows behind nine and ten thousand foot snowcapped mountains. In contrast, the alpine meadows were crowned by enormous trees that covered the almost vertical slopes, and descended into glaciated lakes lying under huge hanging glaciers. It was visual poetry!

At the end of the ride we came to a comfortable Welcome Center, from which it was possible to hike the Hidden Lake Trail which crossed the Continental Divide. We began a leisurely walk, and I spotted brother Robert ahead of us. He had started before at a good pace, and I decided to catch up with him since he is close to his 90th birthday. When I caught up with him, he was with a large group of friendly hikers listening to him telling stories. I chose not to interrupt, but to continue on this astounding trail. Mountain goats were grazing just a few feet away from this well-travelled path! People kept encouraging me: “It gets even better as you go up!” This was an exhilarating stroll through a variety of vistas that elicited praise to The Creator. Every way I turned my eyes, a new perspective, the next valley, another ridge, awed me with a new surprise!

I arrived at the end of the trail. On viewing Hidden Lake, my enthusiasm peaked. I was bursting with delight wanting to share this ecstatic place with my brothers. Realizing that I had gone ahead, I doubled back, and found them. We met a woman who had visited the priory from New Jersey. She had seen me previously, but only recognized me when she saw me with the brothers. She took our picture and went ahead.

A few days later we found the Grinnell Glacier presiding over a



Brothers at Mt Clements, at Logan's Pass

series of high ridges reflected in the calm silver-blue waters of Swift Current Lake. Prior to embarking on a boat for a tour of the lake, a man from Texas greeted us. He had also visited the priory, and he recognized us when he saw us gathered together. We embarked on our boat trip around the lake, sensitive to its beauty, with the added view of a mother grizzly and her two cubs.

I was inspired by the whole experience. These two encounters with friends raised important questions for me. Who am I? Who are we? We are brothers! We brother each other; we brother our visitors at the priory; and we were brothering our fellow visitors to this National Park. We also are brothers to this wilderness, where the words of a song we sing at our common prayer resonate: “The wilderness will lead you to your heart where I will speak.”

Our relationships, this “habitat” of fraternal love and joy, enables a recognition that I do not want to take for granted! These two unexpected friends at Glacier offered a valuable opportunity to look not only at the mesmerizing beauty outside, but to turn inwards into the beauty of our brotherly friendship, of the trust and love that resides deep within the heart, and is simply welcomed and shared. As I kept admiring the beauty of nature, the playfulness of the bear cubs, brothers to each other, I was humbly recognizing the challenge to become channels of God’s grace, truly gifting the community of love we hope for with one another. Brothering reality!

This special time of monastic retreat, and Glacier National Park, a unique place for our pilgrimage, became an opportunity to cherish our travels through the season of Advent towards Christmas. At the core of our heart is a longing for loving relationships graced by soul landscapes of joy and peace. Isn’t this longing really rooted in the heart of God? As we celebrate the birth of an outcast child in the vulnerability of a homeless setting: Jesus—Emmanuel, God with us! Isn’t this Mystery of the Incarnation the loving expression of God’s yearning to become our brother too? ■