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Pastoral Nature Notes
Father Joseph Backowski

Whispering White Pines

If you enjoy walking in the woods you have probably encountered large stands of Minnesota's largest pine, the White Pine. In my humble opinion it was this tree that made it possible for us to become a state. Being long lived and with soft, strong, white wood this tree was eyed and targeted by logging companies to turn into lumber. It was the logging industry that really got Minnesota's economy started that eventually led to our statehood. Yet the great White Pine is so much more than a living economic historical artifact. She has a beauty all her own. White Pine can grow to nearly 100 feet in height. Their diameter is seemingly limitless. If you have ever walked under these great trees and listened quietly, they whisper to each other. This whispering is caused by the wind that gently moves the soft needles of the White Pine. Deer love to sleep under a stand of White Pines because of the soft bed their fallen needles provide. On the tree these soft gentle needles are arranged in bunches of five and are one of the only types of needles that one can caress. In fact, caressing them can have a calming effect. The White Pine was valued by the Native Americans who used her sap for pitch for their canoes and her needles for a Vitamin C rich, tangy tea to ward off scurvy in winter. As with all living things the White Pine too, is a living symbol of God. Her height, size, and strength that stretches to heaven points to the power and eternal nature of God. Yet this power is not destructive; for God's power springs from His gentle Being just as the strong soft wood of the white pine comes from the photosynthetic work of the soft gentle needles. These soft gentle needles also point directly to God's Son our Lord Jesus Christ. Arranged in bunches of 5, her needles remind us of the 5 wounds that Jesus endured on a cross made out of wood from one the White Pine's cousins. Maybe the most enchanting characteristic about her is when her needles whisper. In the lightest breeze they whisper softly and in the highest winds they speak, but still softly. These subtle sounds are reminiscent of what Jesus says of the Holy Spirit: He is like the wind, we know not where he comes from or where he goes, but we know he's there (John 3:8). Finally in these trying times the prophet Ezekiel's words (Ezekiel 47:12) help us find another

meaning: The White Pine reveals that God will keep us afloat in these hard times and will provide us with the spiritual and physical healing to continuing praising Him, just as the sap of the White Pine kept the canoes of old afloat and the scurvy at bay. May the White Pine help us to more deeply see God's greatness and to see that true strength and greatness come not from hardness but from authentic gentleness.