

24 November 2020  
Memorial of Saint Andrew Dung-Lac and Companions  
Pastoral Nature Notes  
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## ***Nimble Nuthatches***

The other day as I was sitting in the woods towards evening and the sun continued slumping in the western sky, the shadows of the trees began to grow longer heralding the last opportunity for creatures to grab a quick morsel of nourishment before the shade of night and the danger of darkness descended. The woods were blanketed by quieting snow and little was stirring.

As I watched and waited one small delightful creature flickered into my purview. It was a nuthatch with his black hat and grey suitcoat he was looking to find a hidden treasure he had hidden a time before. Landing on the grey bark of a middle-aged green ash tree he began to diligently search the crevices of the ragged bark for seeds he had previously treasured away for a moment such as this. No time to forage for food just time to grab a snack from the work of a previous time.

I was captivated by his delightful intricate movements. Moving along the bark up the tree backwards with his head up then down then up again. A moment later, turning ninety degrees he goes sideways up said green ash checking for seeds placed before. Then, spinning one hundred eighty degrees he again continues up the tree sideways. Once in a while, and only once in a while he would move his feathered body forward up the tree with his head facing up.

He reached a branch which extended to the north and moving sideways began to search the branch. He then turned completely upside down moving sideways, outward from the tree, and continued searching for his hidden treasure. Not finding it, probably because a thieving downy wood pecker had stolen his hidden seed, in a petite flash he fluttered away into the brush no doubt in search of another of his trees to search other viable hiding spots.

This nimble little tree climber has so much to teach us about ourselves as human beings. Often, as human beings we desire life to be easy, straight forward, and fulfilling. Yet if we are willing to face reality, we find that our journey is so much like that of the nuthatch. We find

ourselves looking for the Lord. We look in places where we normally find him but do not find him. We then look to move on, but distractions, disasters, the needs of others, the turmoil of the world, and many facets life cause us to have to move seemingly sideways then upside down then sideways the other way and we move up life's tree. It may be the case that as we spin around and back and forth head up but facing down while moving up backward, we do not find the Lord who we are looking for.

Experiences and difficult encounters with other people can seem to rob us of our peace just as the woodpeckers like to steal the seeds of the nuthatches. Yet the true beauty is not found in being fulfilled. It is to be found on the road to fulfillment. The movement of the nuthatch reveals that in all the motions of the journey when put together reveal a winsomeness that can only be divine. This can be our life in following the Lord. If we expect our journey to be straight up as we look to encounter the Lord, we will be disappointed not only because we may not find home, but also because in a straight line there is little beauty.

Let us strive to remember the Words of our Blessed Lord who reminded us that the road to Glory is narrow and winding much like the backwards and side to side journey of a nuthatch up a tree. It is only in the winding road where winsomeness and beauty are to be found.