

PEASANTS, POTATOES AND A PRAYER

A famous – and captivating – painting is *The Angelus*. The oil on canvas was done by Jean-Francois Millet, and completed between 1857 and 1859.

The artist portrays two peasants bowing in a field over a basket of potatoes to say a prayer, the Angelus, which is a short practice of devotion in honor of the Incarnation of Christ repeated three times each day – morning, noon and evening – at the sound of a bell.

In the distance can be seen the spire of a church. So true to life is every detail of the painting that one can almost hear the Angelus ringing. And that is exactly what the artist wanted.

Millet was born of poor parents in Normandy, France. Something urged him to draw sketches of scenes he saw in the family Bible. An artist, seeing them, insisted that young Millet be trained. The community raised funds to send him to Paris, but there the devout Millet was disgusted with what he called the city's wicked art.



Home he went to work in the fields by day and paint by night. In 27 years, he painted 80 to 90 beautiful subjects. One day, he expressed the wish: "I want to paint a picture in which one can hear the sound."

He set to work. When the picture was done, he showed it to a friend with this request: "Name it."

"It is the Angelus," answered the friend. "I can hear the bells."

Millet was happy. He had added dignity to labor. He had given new charm and attractiveness to the beautiful devotion of simple people.

Those whose career calling is health care may not be painting with oils on a canvas, but they have a far more important medium. Every day, they make impressions on the bodies, the minds, the souls of those they serve.

The result: Our residents find the harmony of love, compassion, healing and hope, all forming a sweet serenade of service.

– Beecher Hunter