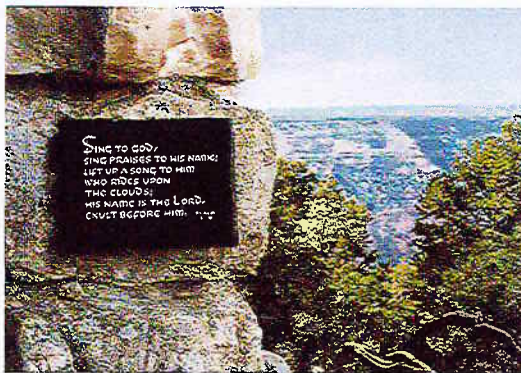


We proceeded to our second goal: Desert View Watchtower. This terrace offers a tremendous view of a large part of the Canyon. This time we decided to let the man in charge know what we were up to before mounting the plaque. "What! You can't do that here, that's impossible!" was his response. Our came the business card and a transformation occurred for the second time that day. "You only want to put up *one* plaque? How about a second one too?" We warmly thanked him and said that we thought that one would be enough for now. He even gave us a five-dollar donation to cover the cost of mounting the plaque.

The third plaque was then mounted at Hermit's Rest. As the day drew to a close, we were filled with praise and wonder at how the Lord had fulfilled His own heart's desire to have us raise up these three "places dedicated to God's praise and glory."

For forty years now, these three plaques have proclaimed the glory of our Creator and ministered to millions of visitors.

Sister Josepha



Praise Plaque at Hermit's Rest



On the morning of July 9, 2003, we received a phone call from the office of the Superintendent of the Grand Canyon National Park. They told us that all three plaques had been removed. They wanted to know if we would like them to be returned to the Sisterhood. What a shock! We were devastated!

The recommendation to take them down had come from their Southwest Regional Office which had received an inquiry from someone at the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) in Washington, D.C. Removing the plaques was probably the easiest way to avoid a controversy, or so they thought.

Of course, we requested that the plaques be returned to us. We took comfort in the thought that they had been on display for over thirty years. We felt like there was nothing more we could do. Little did we know that the Lord was about to intervene and orchestrate a chain of events that for the next two weeks would turn our lives upside down.

That afternoon we received a phone call from *The Grand Canyon News*, a Flagstaff newspaper, requesting our response to the plaques' removal.

For weeks we received requests for newspaper, radio and TV interviews, as well as a barrage of phone calls and e-mails. A public outcry ensued, ranging from sorrow to indignation. Concerned people from all corners of the country were asking what we were going to do. We were not prepared for the nationwide impact which included: 1) a radio interview with *Focus on the Family*, 2) letters and phone calls from the Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C., 3) an offer of help from the Alliance Defense Fund, a legal aid organization and 4) a local televised news spot on our story.



In addition, the Grand Canyon Park Headquarters was inundated by public re-action to the news.

Dennis Prager, a syndicated talk-show host, had urged his listeners to call or write the National Park Service and the US Department of the Interior in support of the plaques. He devoted an hour of his radio program to the issue, saying, "...if public pressure does not work, we will march! Let the Grand Canyon plaques be our rallying cry!"

Several individuals telephoned us offering to mount the plaques on their own property. A man wanted to buy them because he had proposed to his wife at the Canyon. Numerous newspaper editorials attested to the fact that the plaques had been valued and loved by many. Their removal was considered a personal affront. The outpouring of public concern was totally unexpected by us.

We were heartbroken when the three plaques returned in the mail. We laid them in our chapel and

gathered for a time of prayer and reflection. The Holy Spirit began speaking to our hearts, convicting us of our own lukewarmness and complacency. Had we been zealous in our own lives to praise and worship the Lord, we who had witnessed so much of His goodness and the beauty of His creation? No – we had not been a living testimony of what these plaques proclaimed. Once seen and read by millions of people from all over the world, they were now hidden and silent. We had a time of repentance before the Lord because of our failure to honor Him and our sorrow over still another attempt in our nation to remove His name from public life.

At the same time, efforts were being made to remove the Ten Commandments from various public buildings, such as our own State Capitol Plaza and an Alabama Courthouse.

Also, Tom Vail's book, *Grand Canyon – a Different View* which presented a Biblical view of the Canyon's formation rather than the currently accepted theory of evolution, was banned from the Canyon souvenir shops. Our plaques were often cited in the same newspaper articles that reported on these subjects.

Then came the turning point that stunned us all! The Holy Spirit was at work in the hearts of God-fearing people everywhere to bring about a miracle such as none of us could have imagined! The office of the Secretary of the Interior phoned, asking us to please return the plaques to the Park Service. They would be remounted at their original locations until a policy review could be made. They regretted that action had been taken before the case had been officially discussed. We were overwhelmed!

Just two weeks after the removal of the plaques, two of us were on our way to the Grand Canyon. Our joy was mixed with awe, wonder and a little trepidation, as we made the five-hour journey from Phoenix, carrying our precious cargo with us. To think that the plaques would again be installed at their original sites – Desert View Watchtower, Lookout Studio at Grand Canyon Village and Hermit's Rest! How great is our God! We



*Praise Plaque at Desert View Watchtower;
S. Mary Anne and S. Pinea re-establishing the plaques*

were met by friendly and cooperative Park Service personnel, and arrangements were made to remount the plaques. This time they were fastened even more securely!

The following morning, we walked to the edge of the Canyon to sing a song of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. We were joined by a soaring group of rare

California condors that had nested in the colorful cliffs below. We believe these magnificent birds were rejoicing with us at the great things the Lord had done!

Three years later, in August 2006, we were asked to return to the Canyon to share this story in an interview for TV on *The 700 Club*, CBN (Christian Broadcasting Network). What a delight it was to re-tell the wonderful miracle that the Lord had done. The program was called, "God in the Canyon." That afternoon we witnessed several exquisite rainbows, the sign of God's covenant with the earth and its creatures. Our hearts overflowed with the words of the hymn, "How Great Thou Art!" We began to sing:

*O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds Thy hand hath made....*

After forty years, the three plaques still beckon to the millions of visitors who stand and marvel at the edge of the Grand Canyon: "Everyone! Praise the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth!"

How privileged we on Canaan in the Desert were to be a small part of the effort to preserve these signs which give credit to our Creator and honor Him at HIS GRAND CANYON!

Sister Pinea and Sister Mary Anne